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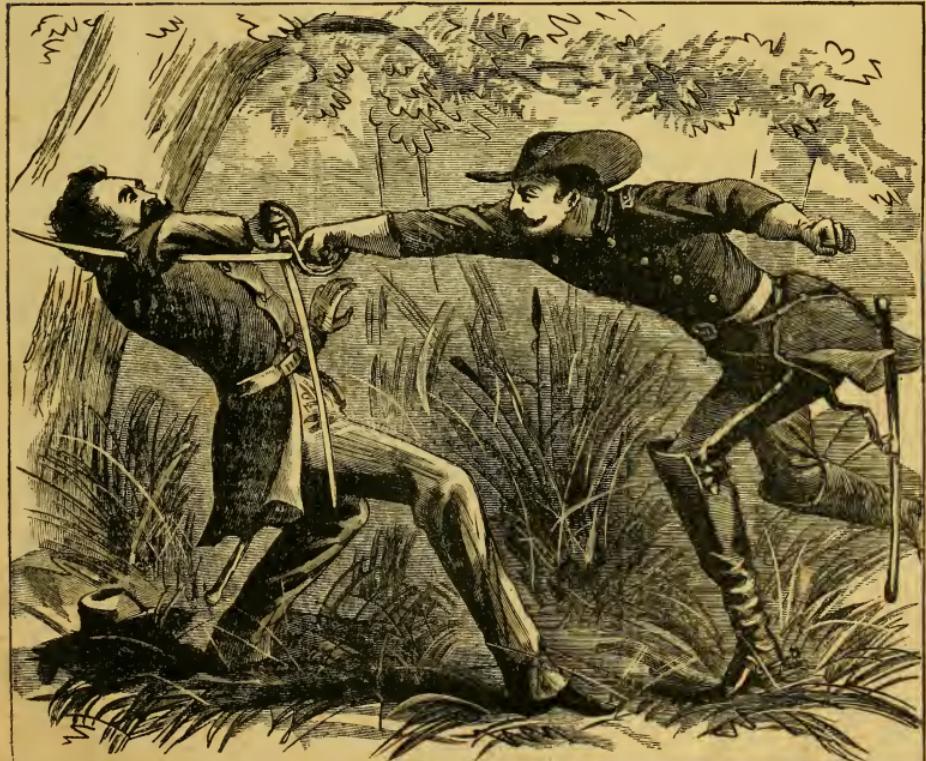
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## CAVALRY SAM; or, The Raiders of the Shenandoah.

BY CAPTAIN MARK WILTON.

A Thrilling Tale of Sheridan and His Men.



Cavalry Sam's Sword Combat with the Guerrilla of the Shenandoah.

## CAVALRY SAM;

—OR,—

The Dashing Rider of the Shenandoah.

BY CAPT. MARK WILTON.

## CHAPTER I.

## THE GATHERING STORM.

A dark cloud was over the land of freedom. The long pent-up fires of discord were showing increased venom, and there was every indication that the threatening volcano would soon belch forth its stream of destruction.

Sectional animosity was going from bad to worse, and if the signs were not deceptive, war would soon stalk hand in hand with death across fair fields and over peaceful thresholds.

It was the spring of 1861, and every inhabitant of the United States was in a state of nervous expectancy.

Down in South Carolina, an ominous prologue was being enacted, which presaged a red drama.

General Beauregard lay threateningly before Fort Sumter, and the whole country was listening for the sound of the first gun.

All expected it, but hoped to see the storm pass by, and their heritage of freedom left intact.

On a pleasant day in April, a single horseman was riding at an easy canter along the road, on the eastern bank of the Shenandoah River, and at a point west of Massie's Gap. It was a fair and pleasant ground, and as he went, he passed grand plantations, where lived the chivalry of Virginia.

The rider, himself, did not look less aristocratic than the proud dwellers by the old river; in fact, a nobler specimen of mankind had seldom been seen on the broad road. Youth, strength and manly comeliness were his visible endowments, and if the costly but modest style of dress, and the quiet, thoughtful air, might be added to the others, nothing, we might say, could be added to the others.

He was about twenty-five years of age, six feet in height, broad of shoulders, full of chest, and with long arms and large hands, which indicated great strength.

Such a man might have been a gladiator in the old days, but the white hands and dress of the lone rider showed that he was not among those who toiled for a living.

As he turned abruptly to the left and went on more rapidly, to make a fine appearance. Mounted on a large black horse, he sat in the saddle like a Centaur, every movement full of ease and grace, and few persons would pass him without taking an additional look.

With his fine form and face, his dark eyes, heavy mustache, and black, curling hair, he somehow brought up thoughts of the old knightly days of chivalry, and proud indeed might be the man or woman who called him friend.

For two miles after leaving the river-road, he rode as before, and then moderated his pace as he came in sight of a grand old plantation.

Broad fields were there, and all richly cultivated, while the house, half-ancient, half-modern, bespoke the wealth of its owners.

It was a fine scene, but one so familiar to the rider, that he gave only a casual glance and went on toward the house.

A negro boy, of about sixteen years, was fast asleep on the grass, and at the sight a flash of mischief passed over the horseman's face.

The soft footed deadened all sound of his approach, and he reached close to the boy, bent from his saddle, and, seizing him by the heels, lifted him clear of the ground, and left him hanging head down.

The colored youth—he was superlatively black—came out of his blissful unconsciousness with a yelp and a squirm which betrayed his alarm, but the tall rider held fast and began laughing loudly.

Evidently the boy at first believed himself in some dreadful danger, but as he managed to gain the better of the rider's face his mood changed, and, despite his position, a broad grin overspread his chubby face.

"Hil is dat you, Massa Sam?" he cried. "Thought dat Tom Millet got me, sah? Wat' for you serbe niggah dis way, sah? Ain't you carryin' de joke too fur?"

"I'm trying to elevate the colored race, you black rascal," laughed the horseman. "What are you kicking for? Can't you bear your honors more modestly?"

"Fore de Lord, Massa Sam, you'd done put

wrong way. Left me go, will ye, sah, 'fore Massa Warburton loses his best nigger. Yahi yahi!"

The boy was taking all in good part, but Sam, as he had called the rider, knew the position was not comfortable, and by a quick movement he reversed the youth and set him on his feet.

"There you are, my gay Cleon, all safe and sound, though it isn't your good wit that makes you so. If Tom Millet had caught you asleep on the grass, he would have cracked his whip on the best darky on the plantation."

"Hil! hil! let me alone fur dat, sah. Tom, he gone down to de village au' tek a sleep while de sun shines. Tom won't catch dis niggah asleep, not mush, Massa Sam."

"See to it he don't," said Sam, more seriously.

He liked this chubby colored boy well, knowing him to be honest and faithful as the day was long, and many a prank like that he recorded, had they had together. Sam Carrington owned a plantation of his own, and could count four-score slaves, but he had no fair pride, and his workmen clung to "Massa Sam" to the rustic.

What the planter might have said is uncertain, for at that moment he caught sight of a lady on the piazza of the house who seemed to be watching him closely.

He sprang from his black horse, tossed the rein to Cleon, and went lightly up the steps, a smile on his face, for the lady was Augusta Warburton, the daughter of a neighbor, the owner of the plantation—he had come to call on her.

They were acquaintances of many years, and had always been on good terms, though the dissimilarity of their natures had always stood between them in a measure. He was frank, free, joyous and rollicking; she, with all her beauty, her genius and her many gifts of nature, coupled with a reputation for benevolence and kindness of heart, so bound in family ties, and in its robustness, was often disturbed if not disturbed.

She looked like a beautiful statue, as she stood ready to receive him, but with the blindness of his frank and happy-go-lucky nature, he did not perceive the severe and even frowning expression on her face.

He half expected a reprimand for being so free with the colored boy, but, instead, as she gave her hand, an abrupt and unexpected question was on his lips.

"Sam, you enlisted?" Samuel Carrington?

"Eh?!" he said, startling. "I'm not sure I understand you, but I may have heard right. Have I enlisted? That depends—As your admirer, I have, but, otherwise—"

"Have done with nonsense," interrupted the girl, and even Sam saw the strange, red flush on her cheeks. "I am not in a mood for jesting. I mean, have you joined the Confederate army to fight against our Northern brothers?"

His face grew suddenly grave.

"I trust the day will never come when one will do that," he proudly said.

"Man, have you not heard the news?" she cried. "One would say you are an actual hermit. Do you know what day it is? The twelfth of April, 1861—the year and the day when a new republic has been born, and a yoke of tyranny thrown off the sons of the South. The twelfth of April, Samuel Carrington—and, yet, you have not heard the news?"

"Not a word. I have been twenty-four hours in the swamp with Amaziah Strout, and no one has crossed my path since then. Is there news? Nothing serious, I hope."

"It will prove serious for the North," was the deep reply, "for on this morning the first voice of freedom has been heard. The world is on fire. What has become of it?"

Samuel Carrington moved backward at the last words, and his ruddy face changed color. At first, a stranger might have thought the signs indicative of a craven's fear, but even the proud girl before him knew that no braver man than he lived in old Virginia.

"No!" he exclaimed, half incredulously, half through pleading for her to withdraw her harsh words.

"And I say, 'Yes.' This morning the battle was opened, and, I doubt not, the garrison is ere this in the hands of our soldiers—ours, Mr. Carrington; the soldiers of an united South, the new patriots of our country."

He saw then that she was in earnest, but his handsome face was sterner and more gloomy than she had ever before seen it.

"They are mad!" he exclaimed. "I did not think it would come to this; I thought their preparations would fall through in

spite of all. And they have fired on the old flag, planning to dismember our broad country. Just Heaven! and these men are my countrymen!"

"More," resumed the heiress; "they are your fellow Virginians; they are heroes."

"All true heroes," declared Carrington, his color returning a little. "Heroes they are, but they are mad, mad!"

"And why mad?"

"Because they have fired on the old flag." "When the flag we all loved, once becomes an emblem of tyranny, it is time to fire on it. I tell you, Samuel Carrington, those men are destined to run with those patriots who fought at Lexington, at Bunker Hill and at Concord, and who, in the name of God of Virginia, they will win their final laurels."

Miss Warburton spoke with enthusiasm. Her fine form was drawn to its utmost height; she looked like a queen delivering a prophecy. Still, the man before her scarcely knew what she said.

"A civil war," he darkly muttered. "Men slaughtered, fields devastated, houses ruined and families torn asunder for clothing and food. Such are the attributes of war. And the sunny South, the South I love so well, will be crushed from its own mistake. Poor Virginia—poor Virginia."

He put his hand to his forehead with a gesture which almost maddened Miss Warburton. In that hour when she was so enthusiastic, brave and confident, it touched her to the quick to see this man with his youth and great gifts from nature fall into so gloomy a mood.

He was lamenting when, in her opinion, he should have been full of fervor and joy.

## CHAPTER II.

## "THERE IS NO MIDDLE COURSE."

"Samuel Carrington," cried the girl, passionately, "what am I to think of you? Men like you called you brave, and you are as good a soldier and rider as lives in the Old Dominion. No one excels you. More than that, you are a Virginian born and bred, and our state is going with the United South. More than that, her geographical situation will give to her soil the majority of battle-fields until we can carry the war beyond Mason and Dixon's line. Sir, will you not be found fighting among the foremost?"

"I may be found fighting," he answered in a firm voice. "If there is war I shall fight, but it will not be against the stars and stripes. It will be under the old flag and for a united country."

Augusta fairly gasped. Before, she had thought him tame, perhaps cowardly; but now she had heard worse. He would be against the South, against Virginia, against even.

But it was so horrible, she could not comprehend it.

Before she could answer, however, another girl glided to her side; one as fair, though less queenly, and the second daughter of Warburton. Sisters they were, and only separated by two years in point of age, but while Augusta was a woman and a queen in seeming, Vida, at seventeen, unlike the average Southern girl, seemed still a child. "Vida is my name, Sam," Vida earnestly said. "For I am with you for the Union. Augusta may secede if she will, but you and I will remain loyal."

A half smile crossed her face at the end, showing that she did not fully comprehend the seriousness of the national crisis, but Carrington was all in earnest, as he added:

"We will, to the end."

"Girl," said Augusta, severely, "how dare you speak such words? You, a Warburton, to raise your voice against your native State. For shame!"

Before more could be said a call sounded from the town and they looked to see two men who had approached unseen. One was on horseback, and a handsome young fellow he was. A trifle younger than Sam, he had the dark complexion of a Southerner, but in his face was a frankness, honesty and earnestness which beat a man who would do no such act and whom an admirable will to carry out a settled purpose.

He was the son of a neighboring planter, and was named Alfred Penrudd.

His companion was less attractive. A man of middle age, stoutly built and ill-clad, his exterior went to pronounce him a poor white, even as his face stamped him a man of low and vicious ways, if not a villain. Bronzed by sun and rain, strong drink had given even a deeper hue to his nose and cheeks; his hair and beard were long and unkempt, and one searching for so illustra-

tion of a hang-dog rascal would not be apt to pass by Jacob Shelley.

He stood beside the horse, looking straight at Sam Carrington, and scowling blackly, while at the sight even the latter's face clouded.

A year before Shelley had been Warburton's overseer, but a number of small rascallities had been brought to his master's notice by the overseer's master, when he had not been allowed on the plantation.

"Haloo, Sam!" said Alfred Penrock, "come here and give me a lift. I have sprained an ankle, and only for Shelley's said I might have been in the swamps."

The young Alfred forgot all else and went quickly to Penrock. Bosom friends the two had been, and either one would risk his life for the other.

Sam assisted him to the piazza, while Shelley watched in a surly way, but, though the horse was his, he still lingered. Penrock seemed likely to fall back and wince from pain.

"I had forgotten him, my reward," he said. "Come here, my man, and name your price."

"Make it what you will," said the ex-overseer, touching his misshapen hat, in an attempt at politeness, "I reckon we shall all be drawing good pay soon, an' then I hope to sell you two men at a time."

"Hearken, if you will, Sam, and one of us

ought to receive a colonel's commission.

Luckily, this sprain is but slight, and I don't

intend that you shall be ahead of me in enlisting."

"The old story!" muttered Carrington, gloomily. "You are all mad for war."

"We are wild with exultation to gain such the opportunity for us the men of '76," Penrock said, his fine face lighting with a glow of enthusiasm.

"Certainly it will be there, and I know of no man more fitted to lead the Virginians in the grand attempt."

But no answering gleam came to Sam Carrington's face. Grave even to sternness, his look was one which surprised Penrock.

"Virginiaus will be there," he said, "but I will be to uphold the old flag and avenge the wrongs of the South."

The younger man sat aghast. Of all things he had least expected to hear such a declaration. In the years that were passed people had called his friend Mad Sam, and when they saw a horse going over a fence they believed no one could leap, Sam's coat-tails were sure to be found floating behind. His wild gallops across country had been the talk of the whole country-side, and so he had not wholly outgrown his boyish pranks. Alfred had been thinking what a noble and dashing soldier he would make, so, it was no wonder he was astonished.

But, while he looked amazed, a gleam of triumph and malignant hate crept into Shelley's face which pictured his heart. He was longing for a chance to pay off the old score.

Then Penrock recovered his tongue, and a long discussion followed. He was at first inclined to make light of Sam's assertion, but when he saw that he was in full earnest his way changed to pleading. He was himself heart and soul with the new cause, and loving his friend like a brother, his words did like to knock him down.

"This is the result of an education at the North," Augusta finally broke in, passionately. "I remember that when you went away my father said to yours: 'No good will come of it. Beware, lest the boy draw poison from Northern milk.' Were not the words prophetic? Sam Carrington went to the Northern college, and then to Europe; now he has come back to us to turn his back on his own people."

"But not on the Union," Vida added.

While Augusta had been speaking, Penrock had chanced to look at Shelley, and the expression on the fellow's face alarmed him. He saw there the reflection of the bitter enmity he knew the man felt toward Sam, and he could not but feel it.

"I had forgot you, again," he said. "Excuse me for detaining you, for I remember you said you were in haste. Here is a gold piece to pay you for your trouble."

Shelley took the money and turned away

but there was an additional surliness on his face.

Alfred had skilfully dismissed him, but he would much rather have remained to use his ears.

He mounted his ungainly horse and rode away west, but at the first turn swung around to the left and pushed on toward the swamps where he had been, and his station on the plantation had been lost.

"Aha!" he muttered, as he went, "I begin to see daylight. Sam Carrington is inclined to kick over the traces, just as I expected he would do. He is goin' agin' Virginia, an' if I don't get revenge for the past I'll be a liar. There will soon be a frothin' torrent here. An' ev'ry man must enlist or shirk. He will be comin' to us, an' it will be very hard to get up an excitement against him which will end his life. Ha, ha! he'll stir up a tiger when he robbeth me o' my job."

By that time the quartet he had left had entirely forgotten his existence in their earnest discussion.

Augusta—but, of her, more anon.

Penrock was deeply moved and amazed. Sam had never been inclined to talk of the national troubles, and for politics he had the utmost contempt; but his friend had never suggested that he would be lukewarm when trouble came. Less than an hour before, he had been thinking what a noble leader he would make for some Virginian regiment.

Brave, dashing, magnetic, a fine swordsman, a soldier and rider; such men were sure to go to the front in the struggle.

But an hour seemed to have suddenly aged the man in question.

Since he had heard the news his gay laugh had not once sounded, and across his manly face the old smile had evidently forgotten how to play.

He saw with the prophetic eye of an intelligent man what must follow if war came, for war is always dreadful.

Devastated fields and broken homes, untimely graves and ruined names. Sam Carrington shuddered and failed to catch the enthusiasm of his friend.

And when he rode away, it was in a fashion far different from his old dash and gaiety. Twilight was falling, but he went on with lowered reins and rode heedless past gloomy swamps where desperate fugitive slaves had lairs, and but too often had done deeds of violence.

"You must side with one of the hostile parties," Alfred Penrock had said to him. "There is no middle course."

He knew it was true, and the knowledge brought the deepest pang of his life.

And at this same moment Augusta, Warburton was in her chamber, her face full of pain, her hand nervously working in the folds of her dress.

"What will come of it?" she was murmuring. "He is brave, noble, but mad. Can his views be changed? If not, God help us all; for I love him better than my own life!"

### CHAPTER III. THE CABIN AND THE SPY.

A week passed slowly by, a week which every person, Northern or Southern, who was then of mature age will long remember. Fort Sumter had fallen. Major Anderson's handful of men had succumbed to the superior numbers and surrendered to the gallant Beauregard.

The event was like a match in dry fuel, and its effects were felt from the eastern boundary of the country to the Pacific. Men began to see that trouble could not be averted, and the seething volcano rocked all the land.

Civil was at was at hand, and the end no man could see.

During the week, Samuel Carrington had been seen but little abroad. He kept for the most part within his own house, and as he looked from the door and saw the broad fields around him, he felt none of the old regret that he was the last of his family.

If war came, there would be no aged mother or father, and no delicate sister to endure her fate.

For himself, he had no fear. His arm was strong, his heart stouter yet, and he would meet the inevitable bravely.

Alfred Penrock visited him every day. They had long talks, but neither would change his views. Each believed himself right, and was fixed in his opinions. Despite this, they always talked in kindness. Old friends, though by nature they might differ, but they would never quarrel.

Pain they might and did feel at the situation, but the clasp of their strong hands was as warm as ever in the past.

Penrock laid all the blame to the Connecticut college where Sam had been educated. Four years there had wrought all the mischief he believed he saw; but, in time, his friend's eyes might be opened.

Twice, Augusta Warburton rode over with him. Proud and cold as people called her, she loved Sam Carrington devotedly, and was ever caring for him, as she regarded it.

He must not be lost to Virginia and the cause she upheld.

One day, Sam mounted his black horse and set out in an easterly direction. He had a fixed purpose in view, and was anxious to arrive at his destination, so, as he galloped along at a good pace, a degree of his old spirit returned, and he looked once more the daring cavalier.

His fine form and face, his long, black and curling hair, his dark eyes and heavy mustache were calculated to attract unusual attention, and a friendly planter nodded as he passed, and then smiled slightly.

"He will never change to any great degree. True, he is no longer the wild youth I called 'Mad Sam'; but I expect to see him as wild as ever as long as he lives, unless—well, we do not know what this pending war may bring forth. It may give him a grave or a general's commission in the Southern army."

But "Mad Sam" went steadily until he neared the border of an extensive swamp. It was not a place of good repute. Outlaws—white and black were known to lurk in its depths, devils of prey. The swamp was wide and there was room for other men beside them. Hunters were there who lived honestly, and tracked their game under the silent pines or the bony bunchy cypress; and to one of these he was going.

Anaziah Straut was the name of the man he sought—or, as he was frequently called, "King of the Swamp." A still hunter by nature, a true trade, he was an old friend of the rich planter. Dissimilar in all things except in honesty and bravery, there was a strong bond between them.

From the time when Sam was twelve years of age he had been a frequent visitor at Ziah's cabin. From him he had received lessons in rifle shooting, in hunting and in trapping.

Together they had slow-tracked many a quarry to its death. In the low cabin the boy had listened to scores of hunters' "yarns," and under the pines they had walked, eaten and slept side by side.

To this man Sam was now going, and when the way became low and treacherous, he dismounted, secured his horse to a sapling, and taking his rifle went on alone. Over a mile of swampy ground he tramped, out of the pines and over low places where only the fallen trees and occasional hummocks saved him from the treacherous mud—by this course he went to the hunter's cabin.

At last he reached a higher, drier region.

Pines became the only tree visible, and to one who loves silence and solitude there is no place more agreeable.

The soft sound of a refuse under foot, the straight, smooth trunks, and the thick, interlaced tops of the trees—it is as though one was in a labyrinth of variegated velvets.

At last the planter paused, for he had come upon an interesting picture.

Between two great trees nestled a little cabin not two feet square, and humbly made of pine branches, poles and mud. Before the cabin sat a single man, its owner, Ziah of the Swamp.

He was fifty years of age, tall and thin, even to a degree painful to behold, but one glance at his bronzed face, clear eyes and muscular form would show that it was from nature, not disease. He was not a hand-some man. In the contrary, he was homely, with his thin face, high cheek-bones, huge nose and wide mouth, and the sparse beard on his face only served to add a ragged look to the whole.

Yet, the face was full of honesty, good humor, frankness and firmness. The deep-set eyes were overhanging by huge tufts of hair growing from the brows, but behind the curtain there was a mind with condor thought not without a latent fire.

One minute Sam looked, a smile on his face, and then strode forward. Little sound his feet made on the fragments of pine, yet the hunter looked up quickly.

"Haloo, 'Ziah!'" the visitor genially said.

Then up sprung the man of rifle and trap.

"Sam, you rascal, you've be'n still trisin' me!" he cried. "E'e's gettin' fer be a common thing for men ter prowl around my

cabin. Some day I'll get eloped with like a pooty girl. Lord! wouldn't I make a bloomin' bride!"

They shook hands warmly, and a comical smile played around the ragged face of the hunter.

"I reckon you could show sharp nails if it came to that," laughed Carrington.

"I should faint. Women always do. Had a sister once who took to jailin' on her marriage day, an' went from one catechism teacher another right through. When the minute came fur her to be spliced, they tied her to a tree an' hung a weight on her under jaw, to make her mouth open an' say 'yes.' Getting married is serious business, you know, Sam."

"I should say so—in your family."

"There is a current o' tragedy 'mongst us. My brother had eleven different gals propose to him before he would consent. After he said he'd have Maria Stubbs, I felt that the family honor was at stake; I insisted to keep the contract or leave the business. I watched him through the day, an' when he finally tried to run off, I had him 'rested' for stealin' my rifle. It took fourteen men ter capture him, and he frothed at the mouth fur a week. He was so wrought up that he took the ague, an' shook off his weddin' clothes as fast as we put them on. We carried him ter the altar wrapped round an' round with ropes, an' when we got to the church found that the bridegroom was absent with another gal. She left a note-of-hand, sayin' she'd spos' Shad would forgive her; an' he did it, too, easy. Lord! you oughter seen him gain flesh arter that."

Carrington waited patiently for "Ziah to talk himself out of breath, answered by a few appropriate remarks, and then added:

"How goes matters in the swamp?"

"Pooty fair, for the kind."

"You intimated that some one had been prowling around your cabin. Who was it?"

"A legged critter o' some sort; ain't got his pedigree. He nosed round here last night, an' though he found the old man awake, slipped away when I tried ter drop on him. Can't say who 'twas, but I more'n half suspect 'twas your friend, Jake Shelly."

"Why was he here?" asked Sam, frowning.

"Can't say. Mebbe I'll find out one o' these days. Why didn't Warburton send him to prison when you showed up his record? Sech men are useful only when workin' behind bars."

"Jake is a thorough ruffian, as you say.

"But, Ziah, I came to-day on business. You have, of course, heard the news?"

"The echo has drifted even into the swamp. Powder has bin burnt an' lead wasted. The rebels have been used fur a target, and the war-hoses are been 'curried'; old men are bein' polished an' new ones made. Yess, I've heerd the news."

"There is going to be war, 'Ziah."

"I reckon that is, Sam."

"The two men looked fixedly at each other, as free in their way as in their speech.

The swamp man had always called Carrington by his Christian name, as did every one else, and pride and pomp never came between them.

"We spoke of this the other day," continued the planter.

"Have your views changed since then?"

"Not an inch, nor a fraction thereof."

"Then we stormy times ahead of us. Union men are scarce along the Shenandoah, and mischief may come to the few who do live here."

Ziah sighed heavily.

"I'll keepr in our way; but in another I do. War will drive me from the swamp—it may even fill these tree-paths with men an' weapons. I hate sorely to turn my back on the pines; but if war comes, why, then, 'Ziah o' the Swamp will develop inter 'Ziah o' the knapsack an' Union blue."

"The way may not be open for us to join the Unionists."

"When we'll fight our way; fur to the old time we must go. Lord! we can't live under any other banner."

Ziah smote his knee, and spoke with unusual fervor—in fact, with far more emphasis than he would have used had he been aware that, while they talked, a pair of gleaming eyes were watching them from a pine thicket not far away.

And in that cover a man was lying at full length with his rifle by his side and his face full of evil expression.

If the lie was always near when talked about, so it was with the ambushed man, for he was none other than the ex-overseer Jacob Shelly.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### ZIAH FREES HIS MIND.

Sam Carrington and his swamp friend talked earnestly for some time. Much was said which they would not wish a third party to hear. With them there was no doubt—they were for the Union, first, last, and always, and when the crisis came they would enroll their names under the folds of the old flag.

While they talked, Jake Shelley listened. He could not hear all they said, but he heard too much for their good.

His small and furtive eyes fairly sparkled, and he looked almost fiendish in his exultation.

"Revenge shall be mine!" he darkly thought. "In a few days all will be bustle and confusion in the Shenandoah, and when that time comes every man will roll up on his side under the sun. Sam Carrington will not be there, and then a few words spoken will launch upon him a power he cannot defend. Ah! rob me of my bread, will you, you accursed hound!"

At the close, the fellow desired to shake his fist like a villain in a play, but he knew he was in rather risky company, for him, and he refrained.

Ziah, however, had used his eyes to good advantage, and when they talked, and without saying a word to Sam, he suddenly arose, and with two long bounds launched himself into the pine thicket.

The planter was taken by surprise, but the tremendous crashing which instantly sounded from the bushes, showed that "Ziah had found some sort of an enemy.

Sam started to his assistance, but at that moment a figure came from cover, dragging a man after him, a person Sam quickly recognized as Jake Shelly.

The fellow had struggled long enough to convince him that he was no match for the swamp man, and when he was brought out into public, he crouched sullenly on the ground, and made no move.

"Tole you so, Sam," said "Ziah, placidly. "Same chap that sneaked round hyer last night, I'll bet you payne. Curious lookin' critter, ain't he? What would you call him? I kin dis' no beauty myself, but I reckon I kin discount Jake Shelly."

The speaker picked up his rifle, and, leaning his weight upon it, looked down on his vagabond captive in a benevolent way.

"What was he doing here?" Sam sharply asked.

"Sp'yan', o' course. What else is he good for? Couldn't have been a present in a lawyer's office, though. If his legs were better shaped he might pass for a hedgehog. Yes, he was sp'yan' an' mighty poor business it is too. Kiowed a man onct who had the same complaint, an' had it bad, too. Kept him sp'yan' up an' excited all the time, so that he lost flesh on the gallop. Where did it end? On the gallows. Had an attract o' curiosity jest afore somebody was to be hung, an' put his own neck in the noose. Result: two funerals instead o' one. Look out, Jake Shelly, or you'll hit agin' the same sum."

Ziah shook out his finger warningly at the ex-overseer, but Carrington was less at ease. He remembered what they had said, and feared that Shelley had heard too much. He addressed the fellow sharply:

"What are you doing here, sir?"

"Answer yer own question by tellin' why you are, byer," was the rather impudent answer. "I'm here, an' the swamp is free to all. Lee, we're at ter me, I come an' go when I see fit, an' it's nobody's business."

"People are liable to make it their business when you play the spy upon them," reported Carrington. "I suspect that you followed me here. If so, what was your object?"

"I have followed nobody," said Shelley, with due prudence. "I walk the swamp, same as 'Ziah does. Ain't it enough? An' I'm a tree-keer in the bushes, can't I look fur who speaks, 'thout bein' pounced on for a—"

He paused and looked doubtfully at "Ziah.

"Speak it out," said the latter, encouragingly.

"I don't think I am wel used," muttered Shelley.

"Maybe a hickory switch would quieken you'resides."

"No, you'ret squeeze a dry sponge," said "Ziah, crossly. "No use to talk to him," said "Ziah, crossly.

"No use to talk to him," said "Ziah, crossly. "No use to talk to him," said "Ziah, crossly.

him. Shoot, whip, or go free; all one ter me."

"Ziah placidly indulged in a chew of tobacco."

"Of course we must not offer any harm," said Sam, hastily. "He has proved his contemptible nature by playing the spy, but as he says, the swamp is free to all. Let him go, and the sooner the better."

"That settles it. Only take care of yourself, Jake. You will be happy. But mind you, I don't want you sneakin' round my cabin, call open if you come at all. Sometimes I set traps in pine thickets an' dig pits in the open. Look out for them, Jake."

"Don't worry about me," was the surly answer.

"Worry? Lord! I wouldn't worry if you was goin' down in a bog. Should consider it a benefit to the country. You ain't, I don't like your ways, Sam. Your face ain't open or manly, no more nor your war is. Should say you were born for the halter."

"Go slow, you lank, lantern-jawed fool," Shelley cried, in sudden fury.

"Slow is; slow an' easy, this time, but don't come again. Keep your distance, an' let it be long one. Do I see you goin'?"

Ziah's voice was growing ominous, and the ex-overseer did not care to be farther with him. He knew both man and master, and, though he was full of anger and spite, did not care to tempt them further. He glanced blackly from one to the other and then promptly strode away through the pines.

"Thar goes a pison son," commented the hunter. "Sech varmints as he ain't safe nowhar. Can't be trusted by fo'e or friend."

"Do you suppose he heard me talking?" Sam asked.

"Reckon he did."

"What will he do about it?"

"Mebbe little, mebbe much. He has the will ter ruin us."

"You are right. He hates me because I unmasked him to Warburton and he there-by lost his situation, and it is plain he has no love for you. But, 'Ziah, we are liable to soon have a tempest howling around our ears if we stay here. Friends and friends will turn against us, for war arouses all of men's evil passions. It would suit Jake Shelley well to lead a mob against us."

"Let him do et ef he da's," said "Ziah, impressively. "If I see a pison snake night in my cabin I crush out its life. Two-legged snake though Jake is, he don't want the tempt me too far. The Strouts are a peac'e family, but when their mad is up they are dangerous. Bi I stand with Jake he will think something has happened."

"That is all well enough, but the fact remains that we are in a decided minority. Nearly all of Virginia is going to secede if it comes to that. We may yet have to flee fast and far for our lives."

"I reckon we will, Sam; I reckon we will," was the gloomy answer. "Things look mighty dubious just now."

Shelley had taken himself well out of sight and hearing. Sam remained with his swamp friend for an hour longer. They had much to say, but they spoke mostly of the future. It fairly bristled with doubts and perils. Perhaps death lurked not far away, and with the wind sighing softly through the grand old 'trees' it was hard to think that Virginia's soil might soon be the battle-ground for hostile armies.

Truly, they had cause to feel gloomy.

From the day when the first gun was fired on Fort Sumter, the work of separation progressed as rapidly as was possible, but there was much to yet be done, and, confining ourselves to the history of Virginia, it was not until the twentieth of April that any distinct action was taken.

Local meetings had been held which had practically settled the question, but when on the date before given the vice-president, elect of the new departure met the leading men of the Old Dominion at Richmond, the cause took a long step forward. Measures were taken to submit to the people a proposition to join the Southern Confederacy, the question was set at the polls, and again the whole country thrilled.

ample time was given the people to reflect; ample time to persuade the wavering when they could be persuaded. Many there were who had no sympathy whatever with the movement, and on the sixteenth of May one of the Virginia senators came to the front by declaring that those who could not vote to separate Virginia from the Union "must leave the state."

On the twenty-third of May the vote was taken and the following results: Western Virginia, which had struck out for itself, over one hundred and twenty-five thousand votes were cast for secession against a trifly over twenty thousand against it.

The deed was done, the die cast, and now we turn to see what effect the passage of time had had on our several characters.

Outwardly, the scene had not changed much. Sam Carrington was still in the swamp and hunted as before, but when he looked at the whispering pines, it was with the air of a man who is about to leave his old home. He knew the storm was about to break, and when it came, his peaceful life would end.

Carrington and Penrock were still at their plantations; but while the latter was working in the fields with all the enthusiasm of his nature, Sam kept mostly indoors, and grew gloomy and depressed.

Every effort had been made to win him over to the Secession movement. Young though he was, he was of an old and noble family, and such men were desired by the powers-to-be. The foremost politicians of the state had called on him; Alfred Penrock had even offered to make him a present of his Augustine, leveling her pride to the dust, had implored him to go with his state.

For she loved this man with all the ardor of her Southern nature. Cold as people thought her, it was but the crust over the warm heart, and Sam Carrington was her king. For him to be lost to the cause of the South, was in her sight, for the Confederacy to be lost, was in his.

Vain attempt! Sam Carrington could not see as they saw, and he kept a way from all meetings, and grew to be very unlike the old Sam, who had been so wild and dashing.

And in the meanwhile, Jacob Shelley was not idle. He had been sowing seeds; and what fruit they bore will be seen in the following chapter.

#### CHAPTER V.

##### THE FIRST PERIL.

One evening, Sam Carrington was seated alone in his parlor and endeavoring to fix his attention on a book which he held conscientiously before him, but the book was old, and his mind was inclined to wander. Outside, the wind occasionally swept past in a gale, wailing as it went, and rain was liable to fall at any moment; and the master of the house had imbibed the gloom of the night.

In the midst of it all a rap sounded at the door, and then an aged servant thrust in his woolly head to announce that "Massa Warburton's boy, Cleon, had done come to be in a great flutter to see Massa Sam."

The planter's heart beat fast. A few minutes with the black boy would tell when they met, and he ordered Pomp to admit him.

Cleon came in promptly. He had not changed greatly since Sam had caught him up by the heels on the memorable twelfth of April, but there was a serious look on his saffie face, not at first seen by Carrington.

"We'st you a friend, friend," saluted the planter amiably. "What the Dickens brings you out to-night?"

"It's a letter," said Cleon, with surprising terseness, and he thrust out a small envelope.

Sam suppressed a whistle, and promptly tore open the wrapper and then unfolded the sheet he took from within. Writing was out in a fine, feminine hand, but there was every evidence that it had been hastily penned.

And this was what he read:

"MR. CARRINGTON—I have a minute in which to tell you that your life is in deadly peril, and even as it is may be too late to save you. You know what has taken place in the South; you know the overruling power which is at work; you know the terrible results which are to follow. You are not to be exempt from the coming trouble. You are to be made all in his power to injure you, and, to-night, will lead a band of men—yes, I mean to like him—into your house. Your planter will be devoured, your house burned, and, unless you flee at once, you will be dead. In mercy's name, do not despise this warning. I have but time to write this, and then, but for the sake of the old days, save yourself while you may."

Sam Carrington read to the end in silence. He was not surprised, and the stern look which came to his face showed that he was not alarmed. He turned abruptly to Cleon.

"Where did you get this note?"

"Miss Vida gib it to me, sa, an' tote me run like de wind gib it to you to immature. She was scared to deaf an' cryin' like slyly, an' I spic it is bad news."

That was all Cleon could tell, and he soon

grew frightened at the look on the planter's face.

Sam was not surprised. For weeks he had expected trouble; for weeks he had expected Jake Shelley would make trouble for him. Every region, be it where it may, has desperate characters, and Shelley has many cronies of his own stamp. He was a thorough rascal, and, hating Sam Carrington, would count easily bring his followers against him and commit deeds which would make the better classes stout Seaboarders though they were, shudder with horror.

The planter silently walked to a cabinet, took down a pair of heavy revolvers and began examining them. He was not alarmed, nor did he intend to desert his home. Very likely he would have invited the Virginia authorities to visitate the state, and then he would go quietly, but he did not intend to be driven away by a band of ruffians who had no authority for their acts except their own low passions and a desire for plunder.

He had wholly forgotten Cleon, but the boy came and laid one hand on his arm.

"What's the matter?" he earnestly said, "is de Hessions comin'?"

"The Hessions."

"Who are they?"

"Why, Jake Shelley an' dem ones."

"Oh! yes, I reckon they are coming. And, Cleon, you must get back home as soon as possible. Tell Vida I thank her kindly, and that I will some day repay her for her—for what she has done. Go, now, old boy, at once."

"No!" declared Cleon. "I stay hyer an' fight. I know Jake Shelley he'll be horsewhip me onet. Yesserday I hear Massa Mar-chinson say dat he not hab any such hang-dog rascal as Jake in his company. Oh, Jake is a bad one, an' I'd like ter butt him onct in de stummick. Let I stay anight, Massa Sam."

He was as thoroughly in earnest, but it was an idea which the planter could not consider. Cleon was the property of Mr. Warburton, and on the plantation of that gentleman he belonged. So he kindly but firmly told the boy as much, and he went slowly from the room.

"So Jake Shelley is on the warpath!" muttered Carrington. "It is no surprise to me, for I will find no tame victim. I will send a message to the village to notify the authorities of this movement of ruffians, and I reckon we can hold the place until they arrive."

He started out, but returned after his sword, thus consuming several minutes, and as he reached the outer door his vision was greeted by a bright glow from the negro room.

Dark as was the night that vicinity was well lighted, for three of the cabins were on fire, and the bright light revealed men rushing about in confusion. Worse than that, men were fighting, and the scene needed no explanation.

Shelley and his gang had arrived on the ground, they had fired the cabins, and now were attacking the negroes who tried to subdue the flames. Shouts began to arise on the air—the alarm-cries of the blacks and the answering yell of the ruffians; and a battle-fire leaped into Sam Carrington's eyes as he started forward.

The rioters should feel his vengeance!

But then, up arose men all around him, and he found himself surrounded by a full dozen with whom Shelley attacked.

And then fire, once burst from their throats, too vile to be recorded here. Oaths and epithets were mingled, and marder gleamed in their eyes. All were thorough ruffians, ex-prison birds, and men who had often skulked in the swamp to avoid arrest. They had for years hated Sam Carrington, even as they hated all who were possessed of honor and integrity. Now, while they were ready to shout for those who seemed likely to lead them to battle, they were in a mood, cunningly wrought up by Shelley, to murder the man before them.

An hour hence they might, perhaps, be lynched for their work, but it was more likely they would be forgiven because of the position they held, and they were resolved to slay the young planter.

Shelley would have gloated over his victim, playing with him as a cat plays with a mouse, but an over-zealous follower precipitated matters. There was a flash, a report, and a pistol ball tore through Sam's clothing.

The act fired his hot blood. His own revolvers were in his hands, and one little

movement, with his wonderful skill, was sufficient to send a return shot which hit the fatal.

The world-be assassin fell dead in his tracks. A terrible howl arose from the ruffians. They had already killed three negroes by the burning cabins, but they chose to regard Sam's act as the beginning of hostilities. Two or three other shots followed, and they leaped forward in a body.

Jake Shelley was on hand for the final act. Cowardly at heart, he had allowed his men to bear the brunt of the battle; but when victory seemed certain, he crept forward, knife in hand, ready to stab the man he hated.

It was a critical moment in the life of the young planter. Death was very near, despite his tremendous struggles; but aid came in a timely and sweeping fashion. A loud and angry shout sounded behind the ruffians, and then Sam saw a rifle barrel sweep through their ranks.

It leveled two of the gang, and arose again. It fell, clearing an open space, and through the gap he saw the face of "Ziah of the Swamp." The hunter was in at the death.

The sight gave Sam new strength. He shook off his nearest foes, leveled Jake Shelley with a tremendous blow, and then stared in amazement as a rioter went off the piazza, impelled by a blow in the stomach from the head of a negro boy.

Cleon, too, was on the field of battle. The ruffians had deserted the piazza; but Sam knew the full was but temporary. They were out in full force, and would not yield the battle tamely.

"Inside and bar the door!" he cried to "Ziah, not stopping for needless words.

As he spoke he opened the door, but suddenly recoiled. A sheet of flame had darted out to meet him, and he saw the stairway all in fire. He had been a traitor within the mansion had been at work, and as he recoiled "Ziah spoke hurriedly."

"Not in thar, Sam, not in thar. The whole ark is bleezin'. I seed the red light from the winders, an' that is what brought me hyer. The house is doomed, sure as pizza, an' we must take ter the swamp. The red ruin is begun, an' only flight can save us from Jezus."

The hunter had correctly stated the situation. Some one inside the house had fired the upper floors even before Sam started out, and already the greedy flames had a hold which no fire department could have subdued. The old Carrington mansion must go down.

"Left we nus go," said Cleon, his eyes glinting with excitement. "We can skip in thar in the darkness!"

"Home, you young rascal!" shouted the planter. "Once more, and for the last time, I tell you go home!"

It was kindness to the boy, and consideration for Warburton that prompted the command, and he was pleased to see Cleon leap from the piazza and dart away.

Sam Carrington was thoroughly aroused, however, and he had no intention of heeding "Ziah's" advice. He was of heroic mold, and such men are slow to leave their ancestral home to the ruffian and the fire-fraud.

His slaves still remained, and with them a fight must be made.

#### CHAPTER VI.

##### AN EVENTFUL NIGHT.

While Sam Carrington hesitated, the chance of escape, for the time at least, slipped away.

Up the steps the Shelley gang again came, fairly bristling with weapons, and it looked as though their moment of triumph was at hand.

The brave pair they had cornered were of a different opinion, and "Ziah's" heavy brows closed over his eyes.

"Sam," he said, coolly, "if we don't cut our way through them devils they will hang us, sure as sin."

"Then through we go!" hissed the planter, convinct, at last, that their only safety lay in flight.

He drew his sword as he spoke, and the

ruffianly gang, who had expected to have the charge all to themselves, was amazed when the pair dashed forward and met him half way.

Ziah's long rifle swept around his head and rattled the opposing pieces against each other; and then Sam sprang into the gap, and his sword began to play, aby seconded by the hunter's favorite weapon.

Sam had taken his first lesson in swordplay when he was ten years of age. He had followed it up all through his youth, and when in Paris, had so perfected his skill that a superior did not exist in the Old Dominion.

The rioters learned this fact to their cost. The supple blade mowed a red swath before it, glided under their clumsy guards, lunging here and there, and making a glittering wall of steel which seemed like a solid wall.

Now was Ziah less effective. His great strength enabled him to use his rifle as though it had been a reed, and where it fell, broken heads were likely to be found soon after.

His opponents knew him well; they, too, were men of the swamp, the gun, and the trap, but not one could stand alone before Amaziah Strout.

Now, it looked as though the whole gang were not enough to hold their ground.

Jake Shelley flinched and sputtered, but he was strong enough to keep in the rear, and though anxiously sought by the defenders, he was not within reach.

It was the old story of individual prowess and bravery against the press of numbers, and, suddenly, the rioters broke and fled, Shelley falling down the steps in his anxiety to lead the way, but quickly recovering himself, and showing a remarkable celerity in retreat.

"Now's our time; git!" the hunter vigorously said.

Sam needed no urging. He caught up a rifle dropped by a dead man, tore off his powder-husk and bullet-pouch, and then the two brave men ran down the steps, turned sharply to the right, and started for the nearest wood.

They were not at once followed, for the Shelley gang were running fast and far in their alarm, and the fugitives had covered a hundred yards before the fact was perceived by the enemy.

"We'll beat them to the now, sure as sin," Strout said in a tone of exultation.

But Sam made no reply. He was looking back at the old home, the house where he was born, and the sight was one to fill him with sorrow and bitterness. Wrapped entirely in flames, it made a red beacon of terrible import, and showed that speedy ruin was at hand.

And the negro quarters, too, were fiercely blazing, making it evident that not a roof would remain for the touch of the morning sun.

Horrible indeed was the sight to the young planter, but he set his teeth and followed Ziah.

Not far had they gone when a chorus of yells in the rear showed that the rioters had discovered their flight, and were recovering their waning courage. They shouted their rage and enmity, and started in rapid pursuit; but the hunter smiled grimly. "He had no fear, unless horses were brought into use.

A clear mile lay between them and the swamp for which they were heading, but it was familiar ground to both, and they ran rapidly, keeping the lead they had at first obtained.

"You see, Sam, et has come jest as I prophesied," said the hunter, anon.

"I see," Carrington feverishly answered.

"You are burned out of house'n home; an' you only hope to keep this pace until you reach Washington."

"I will appeal to the authorities."

"Et you will be good. The time is at hand when the secessors will need evry fightin' man in Virginny, an' Jake Shelley an' his gang count as fast as anybody else. They won't do them harm, but this thing will be smoothed over, an' the gang taken into the fold, sure as sin."

Sam did not answer, for he knew that Ziah spoke truly. War is war, the world over; and he could not expect to have any sentiment on his side in his desire to go against the majority of Virginians. Lawless and unauthorised as the attack had been, his only way was to abide by it, and trust to the protection of the old flag.

That he would gain that shelter was by no means certain, for in the rear came the rioters like bloodhounds. Once in the swamp,

they might be evaded for the night; but what of the day, or days, to follow?

At that very moment, when all were gone from the scene of the conflagration, except the terror-stricken negroes, two horsemen dashed up to the burning mansion. One was Alfred Penrock, the other a middle-aged planter, and a groan broke from Alfred's lips.

"Merciful Heaven!" he exclaimed, "I never thought to see such a scene on the soil of Virginia. Those brutal wretches have done more to-night to blacken the fair fame of the new confederacy than all time can wash out."

Then he turned fiercely to the slaves to inquire after Sam.

Alfred had learned anything, the fugitives were in the swamp. The spreading trees seemed to stretch out their arms in welcome, and they went to familiar ground. The pursuers would find it hard to run them down on such soil.

"Sam," said Strout, breaking another silence, "there is only one way open to us. We had better send North as fast as we can go. It's all val enough to be brave an' die hard; but we can't afford ter suicide jest yet. What you say?"

"Push straight ahead," said Carrington, impatiently, as he nearly fell over a hummock. "All we leave in Virginia is lost to us; we can only go on, and trust to the future to give us a chance for vengeance."

"Jake Shelley is goin' to chase me smart, sure as sin."

"Let him chase. I'll put a bullet in his head if he comes too near."

Ziah relapsed into silence, but he was scarcely in the case. The fugitives knew his way as well as they, and seemed likely to make it hot for them before the chase was over. Prompt action would cut off their retreat beyond the swamp, though he hoped Shelley lacked the brain to secure any such advantage.

Five miles of swamp lay ahead of them, and the first of these was covered without mishap.

The pursuers did not seem to gain, and though Sam and Ziah now and then stumbled over hummocks or splashed into dark pools of water, they bore it philosophically. Their troubles were but just begun, however.

Anon, on the night-air, came a long, tremulous sound which was like a wail, and the hunter started violently. The sound was from their rear, and he had heard it before, that night too often to mistake its character. It came in the nowise, long-draw, quivering and doleful, and he nervously grasped Sam's arm.

"Did you hear that?" he demanded.

"What was it?"

"The cry of a bloodhound!"

"I thought as much."

"Do you know what it means?" demanded Ziah, a little impatiently, for Sam seemed too cool for the occasion.

"I reckon Jake Shelley is hunting us with dogs."

"He is, sure as sin, an' I s'pose you know what that means. You've known of runaway niggers bein' hunted that way, an' you know what usually becomes on 'em."

"They are torn in pieces."

"We are marked out for the same fate."

"Let 'em mark!" retorted Sam. "We are well armed, and if the worst comes, we will show our Virginia blood."

"Good," answered Strout. "That's the way we'll do, an' I reckon the dogs don't eat our flesh."

They spoke bravely, but really, both were sorely troubled. Bad enough it certainly was to have men on their track thirsting for blood, but the addition of the hounds made the situation desperate indeed.

Although much of the land was low, there were no streams, and it was a simple impossibility to throw the keen-scented creatures off the track.

Another mile was soon passed, but the threatening dog had grown more threatening. However it might be with the rioters, the bloodhounds were gaining. Nearer and nearer yet sounded their tremulous notes, and it almost seemed as though an accent of triumph was creeping in. They were gaining, and if the work went on they must be fought.

The fugitives were beginning to feel the effects of the three mile run, coupled as it was with the plunging into pools and over fallen trees, and Ziah suddenly slackened his pace.

"Sam," he said, "we've got ter fight them hounds."

"I reckon we have, Ziah."

"Then let us do et now, afore our muskies is gone. Every minute o' this skedaddle we tellin' on us, an' if we fight bloodhounds we all out our capacity. Sides, when they are once gone, the blamed skunks who own them may be thrown on the trail."

"Was that ter reply?"

The hounds had been gaining rapidly. No man could hold his own against them, and they had a way of getting through the swampy lowlands that was as remarkable as it was dangerous to the quarry, whether man or beast.

With such a creature on the trail, one sees a long, slender body shooting ahead, over a log here, and under one there, through a bunch of bushes like a flash of light, neatly leaping from log to hummock—never pausing, seldom tiring, sure as death, and usually working for death.

Such is a bloodhound on the trail.

Sam and Ziah crossed a little pine knoll at a run, but the hunter paused at the further side. There bordering another lowland, and ending the descent was a line of bushes, and one word from Ziah was enough to make both men drop panting to the ground.

"Git your knife ready," said the hunter. "Don't use anything else if you kin help it, fur we don't want any noise. Hal they are almost hyer—stand firm, Sam, stand firm!"

### CHAPTER VIII. THE RESULT.

The hunter uttered the direction from habit, not because he thought it necessary, and then the two brave men knelt in the edge of the bushes, each with their knives ready, awaited the shock.

Suddenly the wailing howls sounded with startling clearness. The hounds had gained the top of the knoll, and their cries seemed intensified in power and vindictiveness. Their number was as yet uncertain, though they were far too many for comfort, but the ambushed men did not waver.

Down the slope leaped the hounds, their yellow bodies distinct enough in the darkness. Four were already visible, and more might be in the rear.

Straight on they dashed, and then the brutes parted before their eager fronts. Two of them went straight into trouble. Sam and Ziah had each seized a victim, grasping the muscular throat with their left hand; and, at the same time, driving home the knives.

Men of less ability might have failed in the task, but they probably would. But not so with "Ziah of the Swamp" and his pupil. Through the yielding flesh and muscle lay the steel, and then followed convulsive springs, a few half-drawn wails, inaudible a hundred feet away, and two of the brutes were off the track forever.

It was not done too soon. The three remaining hounds had discovered the state of affairs and stayed their rush. Their eyes gleamed ominously in the darkness, and the two remaining men were fighting for their lives. They were panting to avenge their comrades; death and to tear the throats of the ambushers as they had before then torn those of the fugitive slaves.

Sam Carrington settled coolly back to await a fresh foe; but Ziah, remembering the odds were against them, s'ring forward and met a yellow brute half way.

He had planned to end the battle by one stroke of that, but he got no chance on a bush, and he fell with a crash under the dog.

The mishap did not alarm him. His left hand went up and closed on the sinewy neck just before the jaws could fasten on his own throat, and then began a desperate struggle. He had retained his knife, but the rapid evolutions of the dog prevented him from getting in a decisive blow, and the animal proved so strong that he could hardly retain his hold.

He fought for life or death. While he retained it the long fangs could not rend his flesh; if he lost it, the fight might soon be decided against him.

Sam was more fortunate. He had at the first inflicted a severe wound; and, after rolling about for a little while, he managed to add another and decisive one. He threw off the still quivering body and turned to give his aid to Ziah.

Sam and his enemy were spinning about like a pair of tops, and Sam looked in vain for a chance to get in a blow.

Before this could be accomplished, the elder man suddenly cast aside another carbass, and arose with his knife dipped in blood.

"What's the fifth dog?" he coolly demanded.  
"Step dis way, Massa Ziah, an' you kin see him."

The voice sounded from the darkness, and Sam started. Unless his ears deceived him, it was that of Cleon, the black boy.

"Who in sin be you?" the hunter demanded, in surprise.

"Golly! Reckon you uns know me. Jes' you step dis way, an' you'll see me-a-sot'in' on him."

The men strode forward, and saw Cleon coolly seated on the body of the fifth dog. His hands were crossed, unconcernedly around his knees, and he looked the very picture of contentment.

"I know Lord!" said Ziah, in amazement. "How did you get over, you young lunatic, an' how did you kill that dog?"

Cleon held up his gory knife.

"Waz! I'm bleded!" muttered Strout; but Sam was more concerned.

"Why are you here, Cleon?" he asked.

The boy arose suddenly, and faced them with an earnestness new to him.

"Why am I here?" he repeated. "I'll tell you why, Massa Sam. Cause hab struck out fur me, 'Dependance.' Cause I been here when dar is a light in de Nort, an' dat way I am goin'. De overseer's whip shall crack no more 'round my back, an' I will be free or nuffin'. More dan dat, I am goin' wid you. Don't say a word, Massa Sam, fur it will do no good. De chains am broken, an' I am goin' to de land of freedom. Don't try to send me to Massa Warburton, for my face is Nort-always Nort!"

Boy though he was and black of skin, he was all the earnestness and pathos in his manner which deeply impressed his hearers. The hunter added a "Hurray," in a subdued manner, as he closed, and even Carrington was staggered. Still he did not want it said that he had enticed away another man's slave.

He made a few weak objections, but Cleon was not to be moved. He had run away, and if they would not permit him to go in their company he would go alone.

"You shall go with us," declared Ziah. "We are goin' heading across the Potomac, of we kin git ther, an' you hev only ter follow."

Cleon looked wistfully at the planter. "S'z be it, my boy," Sam kindly said, giving his hand. "I only hope you may regret it."

"S'z!"

The warning came from the hunter, and he suddenly dropped on the ground. Sam and Cleon followed his example, and then all saw a man rushing down the slope. The pause had enabled one pursuer, who was the owner of the hounds, and a very swift runner, to reach the spot.

Ziah's fighting blood was up, but the man passed on their right and only a rifle ball could have stopped him. They lay quietly as he ran for two rods, and then came a deep splash as he plunged into the edge of a lagoon or pool of some sort.

He smiled grimly as he heard the man pass, but his wrath abruptly changed to terror from some cause, and he began to scream loudly.

Then the wild cries died away, and the trio knew that, whatever had occurred to the unfortunate fellow, his career was over.

They had neither the will nor the time to investigate. The remaining pursuers must be near at hand and delay would be fatal. So they made a hasty "tour" to avoid the water and went on at run.

"In half an hour," said Ziah, "we will be clear o' the swamp, an' then I know what we can get bosses an' go on like wild fire. We must put many a mile between us an' this place afore mornin'. We must desrt old Virginia fur good until we come back as conquerors."

"I care very little whether I ever come back," said Sam, gloomily. "I can see only darkness and ruin for our fair state; and the part of a conqueror would scarcely be a pleasant one."

"Still, I hanker like sin ter conquer Jake Shelley an' his gang. But let me get my grins out on them an' you'll hear the dry bones rattlin'! You will!"

"There is no place to the uttermost," said Sam, with subdued passion. "My heart is tender toward Virginia, but those ruffians shall be punished if I live. Ay, I must return at some day, return for vengeance on them and to see Alfred Penrock, Augusta and—Vida. Bless the little girl she thought of me when I was in permanent semi-tun warning, nor shall I forget it. I will come back."

It was a confident speech; considering who he was talking to. Virginia was ablaze with sectional excitement and no love was wasted on Unionists. When they crossed the Potomac they would be safe, but not before.

No further sound was heard from the pursuers. The swamp was traversed and left behind; horses were then obtained and their route anticipated. Such few people as were abroad at the time were scattered, and the morning looked in surprise at the three galloping riders, but no one opposed their going.

In fact, they went on to the Northern lines in safety, and there found the society they craved in the national crisis. Having cast their lot for the old flag, their place was among the men who were to fight under its colors.

Sam and Cleon were not long in locating themselves. The former enlisted in a Connecticut regiment, in which were several of his old college friends, making no attempt to secure an office. He was willing to commence at the foot of the ladder, and so the name of Private Samuel C. Carrington went on the muster-roll. How long it would stay there was uncertain, for the men had enlisted for only three months.

Cleon, taking the name of Edmund Smith, was "adopted," as he expressed it, by an officer as his servant; but Ziah Strout would not enlist. He had all the tastes of a scout, and knew Virginia well, and he was ready to act as guide or spy, if so desired, if not, to fight on his own hook.

And so the trio settled down to await what might follow, and during the long days which were passed in inactivity no word came to Sam Carrington from the Shenandoah.

He had said that he would some day go back to the old home, but he little knew how long a time was to elapse before he would keep his word.

The men who followed the fortunes of the men of the Potomac during the first year of its existence will see many famous engagements. The planter received his "baptism of fire" at Bull Run, and the followed that long period of inactivity so well remembered by men who had expected much of the Northern army.

Despite this, Sam Carrington crept slowly up from the ranks, and it was in a captain's uniform that he went with McClellan's army, his name being Ziah, in 1862.

The Northern papers had substituted the trewain headline of "All quiet on the Potomac" for "On to Richmond," but the time had not yet come for the victors' heel to tread the streets of the Southern city.

At the battle of Malvern Hills, Captain Carrington's military career suffered a severe check.

He was severely wounded in the leg by a rifle ball, carried North, and ultimately discharged from service as one crippled beyond redemption.

For some months he went about on crutches, and then came a brilliant idea.

When in Paris, three years before, he had become personally acquainted with a French surgeon, reputed to be the best in the country.

Across the ocean to him went the planter, and under his care the injured limb so improved that, in July, 1864, Sam Carrington set his face toward his native land, as sound and well as on the day when he fled from Shelley's outlaws.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### IN THE FIELD.

During his residence in Paris, Sam had heard very little from such of his old acquaintances as have figured in the preceding chapters. That little was nothing more than occasional newspaper mentions of the Confederate General Penrock, by which he knew that his old friend was still alive, and winning military glory.

Of the Misses Warburton, Ziah Strout, Cleon alias Edmund Smith, and Jake Shelley, he knew absolutely nothing.

Since he had been crippled, Sam had been a morose and disappointed man. He saw his country in danger, and he was in no condition to help his kind. War might surge to the very doors of the White House, and contending armies fight in the hills of congress, but he was out of the game.

With his recovery came a revulsion of feeling, and by the time he landed in New York he was once more the gay and brilliant Sam of the old days. He was going into battle again, and the thought brought so much of

exultation that he laughed and jested when others were grave.

Landing at New York the middle of April, he at once hastened to Washington, anxious for active service. He had had enough of fighting on foot, and through the aid of friends who had not forgotten his services with the Army of the Potomac, he was at once attached to the cavalry force of General W. W. Averill, once more starting as a private.

He had found a congenial field at last. A fine horseman, he had all the qualities that go to make the true cavalry rider, and he at once entered on the new life with zeal. His first service was with General Averill, moved to destroy the lead mines at Vicksburg early in May, and from that time he followed the fortunes of that commander wherever he went.

His bravery, prompt obedience of orders and dashing ways soon attracted the attention of his superior officers, and once he began to see promotions come to his hand, so that on the last day of August, he was once more enabled to sign his name Captain Samuel Carrington.

During his three months with the cavalry, he had several times heard men mention one Amaziah Strout, a famous scout, spy and guide; but their paths, so long divided, had not yet converged.

Carrington had not been progressing very favorably in the Shenandoah Valley for the Union cause. There had been engagements which sometimes resulted in victory, and as often in defeat, and Lieutenant General Grant saw the need of a better organization at that point. Maryland and Pennsylvania required protection from invasion, to say nothing of the demand for a forward movement; so, after some delay, several minor departments were consolidated in one, and, on the 15th of August, General Sheridan was given command.

The six weeks which followed gave considerable active service to the cavalry, but, before making a bold push forward, Sheridan had to thoroughly organize his army, and secure permission to attempt the plains formed by his active mind.

With each dash, Sam Carrington gained fresh laurels. He was always quick to obey, and, since his elevation to the rank of captain, he had shown a skill in executing orders which did not pass unnoticed. All these things, combined with his splendid horsemanship, finally gained for him a sobriquet by which he was ever after known.

A handful of men were needed for a scout, and Sheridan had turned to Averill, and lightly said: "You may send Cavalry Scouts. I'll be at that hour the ex-planter had a name high back to him like a burr."

One day, near the last of August, General Averill, while making a tour of the camp, came to Sam in person, and, after greeting him, abruptly said:

"I desire you to take fifty men, captain, and go on a scout toward Bowstring's wood. A scout has just come in and reported that there are a number of suspicious characters hanging around, and although they wear no uniform, I suspect they are trying to learn too much. Look them up and deal with them as your judgment directs, but try to bring in at least one prisoner. I'll send the scout to you at once."

Sam answered cheerfully; and, while the general walked away, prepared for the expedition.

He was still busy when a peculiar voice sounded behind him.

"Who is this scoundrel that goes out under my wing? I'd like ter meet him 'en' before we start, fur we may hev to fight him."

The voice was very familiar to Cavalry Sam, and he wheeled quickly, an eager look on his face. His eyes had not deceived him. Before him, looking exactly as he did three years before, Ziah Strout stood with his long arms wrapped around his rifle.

"I'm a young, young officer, and the scouts wrapped their arms closer around his rifle and stood resolutely.

"Don't ye do it, Cap'n Carrington—don't ye do it," he said, in a subdued voice. "The slasher's a-lookin'!"

"What of that?" demanded Sam, greatly astonished at having his hand refused.

"Why, we ain't got no place to go, 'en' we ain't got no longer, an' this ain't the Shenandoah swamp. Times is changed. You are a cap'n o' slasher's an' I'm only a partidur. Don't let the slasher see you too familiar with such!"

Sam burst into a ringing laugh, and then

ture "Ziah's arms loose, and grappled with his right hand, which he shook violently.

"Why you old rascal," he said, regardless of the states of the men, "who has been putting folly into your wise head? Too much war has petrified your heart, but you can't give me the cold shoulder. You and I have been on too many a trail to put on airs now."

The scout looked around in horror. To his military mind, Sam was committing an irreparable breach of decorum, but he knew him too well of old to oppose his will any further.

Questions were excitedly asked and unanswered for a few minutes, and then what they did not know of each other from hearing "Sam" to give form. Full explanations must be reserved for another time, but Sam was pleased to hear that "Ziah" would follow the fortunes of Sheridan's army for a while.

"But I ain't bound ter *nothing*," the scout emphatically said. "I'm a treeboomer, or, in other words, I fight on my own hook. No man can order me about, but, at request, I always put my shoulder ter the wheel for the old flag. I like Sheridan, au' byers as expects his slashers will go it like sin in the Shenandoah."

By this time all was ready for the scout, and the men mounted, and rode off with Carrington and Shroud at their head. As they went, the latter gave Sam a good deal of information concerning old acquaintances, and a few items may be given here.

Augusta and Vida Warburton were at the old home in the valley, but their father had long since succumbed to old age, and closed his earthly career. Augusta was as devoted as ever to the cause of the Confederates, and she had done much for their armies from time to time, but the younger sister had no sympathy for the seceders.

Alfred Penrock was with General Early, and Sam had heard of him too often in a public way to need "Ziah's" assurance that he was one of the best regimental leaders that the war had produced.

Having gained an outline of all these matters, Sam turned his attention more closely to the party he had come to rescue. Five miles ride to reach Bostwick's wood, but the distance was soon covered by their riders in blue and the suspicious locality was approached.

The place was not a pleasant one to explore. Five miles long by three wide, it was in all parts dark and tangled, while near the center was a swamp covering two or three acres, which afforded treacherous footing even for a man of light weight.

The bluecoats were not pleased at the out-looking dreary and unnatural education they preferred to find in the open field rather than in a chapparral, but they kept the peace as they rode, and were ready to support Carrington to the death, if need be.

Having reached the edge, Sam spread out his command in a long line, with "Ziah" in advance as a scout, and the decisive advance was begun. The way, as has been said, was tangled. Small bushes grew plentifully among the larger trees, and the bluecoats were obliged to pick their way here and there without much regard for order.

Spurred on by the warlike presence of the scout in advance girded them from danger of an ambush. He covered ten feet to every one made by the slow-moving horsemen, and, gliding rapidly from side to side, looked into every suspicious place before they entered.

Certain signs, often used by him and Sam in the old days, had been agreed upon before starting, and when the order was suddenly given along the line for the command to halt, they knew something had been seen or heard, known to them, the plaintive bird-call from ahead had no particular meaning.

Cavalry Sam was better versed in "Ziah's" ways. The bird-call had come from the scout's throat, and it meant halt! So he gave the order and the advance ceased. Then came another signal, and the officer spoke to the second in command, gave his rein to a private, dismounted, and glided through the bushes.

He found "Ziah" at the base of a ridge, calmly waiting for him to join him.

"Well?" questioned Carrington.

"Look over ther ridge."

Sam looked, but, at first, saw nothing. Then, to his keen sight, came a new discovery.

"Is it smoke?" he asked.

"Sure sin', and see you ain't forgot what I ar'ned ye. Yes, there is smoke than, an' I opine it comes from a fire. Stay hyer, cap'n; I'll go an' see."

"I will go, too. Move to the left, and I

will take the right. Afterward, if not tooreckless, meet at the center."

"Ziah did not remonstrate. "Mad Sam" of the old days, had been his pupil; Captain Carrington was his superior officer.

They separated, and with the caution of Indians, crept toward the top of the ridge. Beyond the crest, they could still see the smoke curling upward among the tree tops, and they had no doubt but that some sort of a camp was there.

#### CHAPTER IX.

##### BUSHWHACKERS.

Sam felt his blood thrill as he crept along through the bushes. His many expeditions with "Ziah" in the past had been taken because of an inborn love of the wood and its ways; and though the wild boy had become an energetic man, the old feeling was still there.

Having reached the top of the ridge, he looked over and again saw the smoke, but, though it was more distinct and plainly located, the trees and bushes at its source prevented him from seeing the builders.

He surveyed the whole locality with hawk-like keenness, and then crept down the southern slope. It was not very dignified work for an army officer, but he was so situated just then that he could disregard form and ceremony, and he went on with real pleasure.

Gliding from rock to rock and through thickets, he soon gained a view of the spot from which the smoke was arising. Huge pine trees arose thickly on the ridge, and in a group of those, Sam, peering out from a thicket, saw the campers.

A camp in the wood is always picturesque, and the score of brawny fellows who lay around on the soft droppings from the trees, particularly wild enough of look to match with their surroundings.

No uniformed soldiers were they, blue or gray, but men in garments of varied colors, ragged and soiled by mud, some without sleeves and others decapitated at the bottom until they were merely jackets; all rough, ragged and uncouth. Nor were their wearers any better. Men gaunt and ill shaped of form, with unkempt hair and beard.

Sam had seen such men before. They are to be found everywhere. Go where one may, the vagabond and vagrant is visible. There were not to be found in 1861, nor were there more in 1864, for the iron hand of war had been there. Sam had seen such men in the old days—had known them as "poor whites"; and, once, he had seen men very much like them come to his house by night with torch and rifle.

How vividly that night of terror came back to him then.

He looked closely at the campers, and then suddenly he said: "Did he see a ghost, or was the named man by a tree or a log who had led on the rioters to murder him?"

There was no mistake; Jacob Shelley was before him, and not much survey was needed to mark him as the leader of the band.

"Bushwhackers!" commented Sam, aloud. "A pretty gang of ruffians, on their looks and leadership go for nothing. Aha! Jake Shelley, I think I see revenge in store for me. You are the only man in Virginia I aspire to injure; but, by my life, I'll be even with you now, and by my bloodhounds shall be human ones."

The best of men sometimes make mistakes, and as often are taken off their guard. While Sam looked, he did not see that a dark form was approaching him from the rear; nor did he suspect that one of Shelley's scouts, coming in basitly to apprise the band of the approach of the Unionists, had seen the position in blue crawling through the bushes.

Nevertheless, the bushwhacker scout had seen all this, and in his anxiety to capture the spy he had forgotten the more important business. He wanted the glory of taking Sam alone.

Thickly covered as was the ground by the droppings from the pines, not a sound betrayed his advance. He crept on, nearer and still nearer; then, suddenly his whole weight dropped on the captain's back.

Sam, with both hands clasped, did not lose his presence of mind. A heavy weight was on his hips, and heavy hands were on his shoulders. If the unknown knew his business he could not be "turned."

So the captain, without a movement that might have been expected, flung his hands up over his neck and caught at the bushwhacker's garments. By chance he secured a good hold, and then the man, who had

thought to fight at an advantage, found himself drawn down and gripped tightly by the throat.

He was strong, being larger of frame than Sam; but he soon found he had been saddled a restive horse. One resistless squirm and the captain had turned himself. A slight shifting of hold and he had the bushwhacker on his terms.

The latter felt the strength of his long arms and accurate despatch of shouting for help, but the grip on his throat shut off utterance as well as wind. In a short time it would strangle him unless he worked himself free.

A desperate struggle began, but it was far less noisy than might have been expected. Sam had wound himself around the fellow like an anaconda, and if the latter had been in a joking mood, he might have compared his situation to that of a man in the hug of a crocodile.

Carrington's tremendous muscle had its share. He planted the bushwhacker on his back, gained his own knees, and assumed a most ferocious scowl as he looked down on his victim.

"One word," he hissed, and I'll cut your throat. Do you hear me?"

The man did hear, but could not answer. He was already growing purple in the face from the terrible grip on his neck, and his frantic and systematic struggles showed Sam as much.

"I am going to let you on your breath again," he sternly said, "but I swear that one word of alarm seals your fate. Hear me, and take warning."

He released his hold, and still watching his captive, proceeded to use the man's knife on a stick with such dexterity that he soon had a gag finished.

By that time the prisoner was breathing more naturally, and the terror expressed in his face had given place to fierce rage; but he dared make no cry.

He had learned the mettle of his enemy to his sorrow.

Sam fitted the gag into his mouth, and looked about for material to use for binding.

At first he seemed destined to fail in this, but luck favored him. The bushwhacker, having no suspenders, had a cord ingeniously wound around his waist to sustain his lower garments, and the captain promptly appropriated it and finished securing him.

"Now," he quietly said, "all you have to do is to keep where you are for a few minutes. Business obliges me to take my departure, but I'll leave you in good condition."

As Sam spoke the last word, he heard voices behind him on the slope, and, wheeling, he peered through the bushes.

Down the descent, a score of men were coming, their faces directly toward him, but their appearance did not afford him pleasure.

Plainly, they were of Jake Shelley's own kind, rough-and-ready bushwhackers; and their arrival placed him between two fires, as it were.

He crouched lower in the bushes, his weapon ready for use, and awaited with some anxiety.

Discovery meant trouble of the worst kind, perhaps death, but he was resolved to fight it out, if need be.

A peaceful surrender would only give a tame victory to the bushwhackers and do him no good.

He wished for his bluecoats then, but it would be madness to signal. As though in answer to his thoughts, a bird-call just then sounded from the northern slope, and he knew "Ziah" had finished his survey, and gone to the place of meeting; but he was dared not move.

The new-comers made considerable noise, and the first lot soon arose.

Jake Shelley pushed to the call just then, and gave a challenge, but, immediately after, he seemed to recognize the leader of strangers, for the two men stepped forward and shook hands cordially.

Kindest spirits had met, but their rags deprived them of all claims to the dignity of chivalry.

The two were standing near Sam, and he heard all that they said. Questions were mutually asked and answered.

The new-comers were of a roving band, and their leader seemed to be named Bragdon. Evidently, he and Shelley were birds of common plume, for he was soon cordially invited to camp with the first party.

The bushwhackers needed only the word.

They then flung themselves down in their

tracks, produced their pipes, and began to smoke vigorously.

Doubtless there was a touch of the picturesqueness of the scene, but all this was lost on Captain Sam Carrington. By the formation of the new wing, he was placed in the very heart of the dual force, and only concealed from their view by a thin curtain of bushes.

His situation was serious, and he realized it fully.

If his prisoner should manage to give the alarm, or if one of the facts he should thrust his nose inside the thicket, discovery would surely follow, and two score of such rough troopers would make short work of an officer in Union blue.

He fixed his eyes on the prisoner.

"Johnny," he said, with surprising lightness, "observe this knife. It was once our own, and you know its temper. Well, if you utter so much as a groan, or crackle a stick, the knife ends your life. Understood?"

The man nodded, sullenly. He possessed an average amount of pluck, but he had no desire to buck against sure death.

Sam fell to thinking. The bushwhackers had settled listlessly down in their places. Plainly, they did not know aught of the Union cavalrymen, and the fact that they had come from the ridge fell heedlessly on their hearing. Quite enough they certainly were, but it was like the sleep of a panther. Once aroused them and they would be merciless, and it would be almost miraculous if some one of them did not soon intrude in the thicket.

As has been said, Sam fell to thinking. He wanted to get out of the trap badly, but if he did it to be done? Clearly, not by stealth, for no such way was open. If he went, it must be openly. How would a dash succeed?

He asked himself the question, and answered it by deciding that it would only serve to make himself a sieve, through the instrumentality of Confederate lead; and he wanted no such ballast.

One only thought occurred to him, and though that was a desperate one, he resolved to take one step in executing it.

He quietly relieved his prisoner of his coat and lower garment, and slipped them on over his own uniform. This was not difficult, for, as we previously stated, the man was larger of frame than he, and though it left the Confederate in rather a scatty state of attire, it was according to the old saying, that "a man in war is a man in a coat."

Next, Sam plunged his hands into a spot of earth, which was dampened from a spring above, and proceeded to spread a little mud over his face, after which he disarranged his hair to the best of his ability.

The work had been scientifically done, and when he had added the prisoner's slouch hat, he looked like quite a passable desperado. Just what he was to do next he had no idea, but at that moment he was startled by seeing one of the bushwhackers entering the thicket.

## CHAPTER X.

### SAM AS A BUSHWHACKER.

Brave as Cavalry Sam was, he felt genuine alarm at seeing the Confederates thus advancing. If he saw that captive guerrilla he would sound an alarm, and the captain was not mad enough to think he could overcome and bind the stout fellow in the heart of the camp without giving his game dead away to the enemy.

Plainly, the intruder must be stopped.

Acting on a sudden idea, the disguised officer pushed forward and met the man face to face.

"Better hold up, old man, of yer don't want a pesky scratchin'," he said, gruffly. "Them scrub pines tickle like as though they had thorns."

He stood still, rubbing his hands as though they had been injured by the bushes, but looking the man full in the face and resolved to make an effort to him and then a dash if anything wrong was suspected.

A half-smile crossed the man's face and then his own gaze fell to Sam's hands. The latter looked in the same direction and then a sudden perspiration burst from every pore.

There, showing plainly through a long rent in one sleeve, the Union blue of his uniform stared them in the face.

No wonder the captive was alarmed; no wonder he raised his gaze quickly and savagely to the other's face; but the bushwhacker, with only a careless glance at his own mettle, and it did not work.

lessly up at the dirt-grimed face of his new acquaintance.

He was himself, one of Bragdon's men, and he supposed Sam belonged with Shelley's band.

"I was er tryin' to find the source o' the water I see," he explained. "My throat is dry as an army cracker."

"Right up you, comrade," said Sam, promptly. "Foller me an I'll show you the way."

"Lend on, old man."

And there, one or two of Bragdon's men saw two persons walk leisurely up the hill, side by side, without a suspicion that anything was wrong. One of the two they knew to be Dick Ford, of the men of their company; the other, of course, belonged with Shelley.

Sam proved a faithful guide and led his man to the spring at once, but there he encountered a fresh danger. Two of Ford's men had come up, and they were shuffling a pack of greasy cards and grown animated at sight of the new comers.

"Hallo, Dick," one of them said; "you are jest in time. We want two more in this game. Will you jine?"

"Reckon I will, arter I wet my whistle. Be with you, old man?"

Sam was on the point of pleading pressing business, but the two changed cards and agreed to oblige them. So while Ford drank, he busied himself by pinning up the dangerous rent in his sleeve and the Union blue was out of sight for the time being.

Dick Ford drank his fill and the quartet sat down to play, depositing their arms in a pile near at hand. It seemed as though Cavalry Sam was playing with fire, but he maintained a remarkable coolness. The spring was distinctly heard thirty yards from the edge of the hostile camp, and the water might soon draw other men there.

"I take it you are one o' Shelley's men," said the previous speaker of the original card players.

"Reckon I am, old man, an' I don't knuckle fur any critter in his brigade. I'm an old swamp-sucker fur one o' my years, an' that I don't know about big is incontrouner."

This modest summary of his own importance did not materially affect the other men. They had heard such boasting before and they wanted to be courteous to one of Shelley's men, especially when the cards were going around.

They expected a good, solid game, but Sam had an opinion of his own. As Dick Ford started up the cards the disguised Unionist suddenly leaned forward.

"Wait a bit," he said, touching his arm.

"Let me call your attention to one thing before we play. Do you see this six-shooter?"

"Yes," said Ford, rather indifferently.

"You observe that it is loaded?"

"Sartin."

"Also, that one good marksman could clean off three or four unarmed men when biding such a barker?"

"Sartin. I've done it myself."

"Good! Then you know how the machine works. Well, gentlemen, allow me to say, you are my prisoners!"

Sam suddenly changed his tone. The listless look vanished from his face, his eyes flashed, his voice was clear and sharp, and his revolver was presented full at Dick Ford's breast.

"What do you mean?" demanded the bushwhacker, still unsuspecting, but resenting what he thought a poor "joke."

"Look behind you."

The men obeyed.

There, only a few feet away, stood Ziah, a revolver in each hand, the muzzles covered the two breasts; their own weapons, which had been piled together, as before stated, under his feet.

"You are our prisoners!" repeated Sam, sharply, "and you munstn't kick against fate. If you try to run, or to alarm the camp, you are dead men."

As he spoke, he threw open his ragged coat at the breast, and they saw the Union blue and the glittering buttons underneath.

The fight was convincing, if his words were not and they knew they were in hostile company.

"Don't move an eye-winkin'," said Ziah, warily, "or you are dead men."

The bushwhackers were not fools. They saw that they were in trouble, and that the two men had the power to keep their word. Doubtless, they had the will, also.

Still, they began to bluster, and, through belligerent looks, tried to cover the Unionists; but they had been caught by men of their own mettle, and it did not work.

Cavalry Sam would allow no violence, and the prisoners were systematically secured and the wounded given due attention.

Not one of the boys in blue had been killed.

Four or five had wounds, and the one

marked by Jake Shelley at the first of the fight had an ugly bullet track along the top of his shoulder, but he had for the time stunned him, but, taken all in all, it had been a most successful performance.

Cavalry Sam allowed them to ease off a little of their breath in empty words, and then he ordered them to face to the north and march.

It was a galling downfall, but glittering sixes are always powerful in their way, and the ragged trio had a due regard for their lives.

They demurred, threatened, and swore; but ended by obeying the command. Arising, they started off over the crest of the ridge, and then Ziah, followed after with the revolver still loaded.

In this way the ground between the spot where they were being bound, Sam cast off his disguise and prepared for further work. He was a mere prisoner, and he wanted to clear the Shenandoah Valley of a gang of men who were alike a nuisance to Union soldiers and Southern citizens.

Ziah was chuckling as he told the men how they had taken in the trio, but Sam had no time for conversation.

It was the sight of Strout lurking in the bushes by the spring, which had caused him to go with the card-players, when he might have stolen away, and the scout had promptly prompted the stacked weapons, as before stated.

The boys in blue were divided into two parties, and while Carrington himself went away with one to gain the further base of the ridge, Ziah remained with the second, which had been left in charge of a lieutenant.

That party rode to the ridge, and left their horses in the bushes, after which they crept forward a little and waited.

It was not long before the old bird-call sounded at the south. It was the signal from Ziah to announce that he was in position, and an advance was at once begun.

Up the ridge they went like creeping panthers; then the word ran along the line, and they dashed over the ridge, crept down on the right, and seized the bushwhackers.

Never was there a more complete surprise. Not a guard had been posted; every man was taking his ease, and many of them were fast asleep.

When they awoke, it was to find the enemy in their midst.

Jake Shelley was the first to recover his wits.

He sent a shot which dropped a cavalryman, and the next fired the blood of the lieutenant. He shouted an order to fire, and the wood roared out the echo of the volley.

Consternation seized upon the bushwhackers. They were not the trained soldiers of the Southern army, those gallant men who could stand and die, if need be, before a superior force; but men who had always fought with the odds in their favor, and skinned the bush when they should have been drilling.

They saw several of their men fall, and then turned to flee.

Even Shelley did not try to stop them. He went with the foremost, and it was each for himself.

At the base of the hill they had horses, and they rushed wildly to secure them.

The spot was reached; but they arrived only to run into the hands of Carrington and the first party, which had gained the position by a detour.

Their situation was desperate then. Hemmed in by a superior force, they were like rats in a trap; but desperation brought their teeth to the front, and they began to fight.

Sam shouted to them to surrender, but they only set their faces to the front, and made war in their bodies.

Before such impetuous charge the Union line wavered for a time, and though the Unionists consolidated as soon as possible, a dozen or more men broke through, and took to the bushes where pursuit was useless.

The others were soon forced to throw down their arms and surrender. Captivity was better than death, and in sullen silence they submitted to the wishes of their conquerors.

Cavalry Sam would allow no violence, and the prisoners were systematically secured and the wounded given due attention.

Not one of the boys in blue had been killed. Four or five had wounds, and the one

marked by Jake Shelley at the first of the fight had an ugly bullet track along the top of his shoulder, but he had for the time stunned him, but, taken all in all, it had been a most

successful performance.

Twenty-two prisoners and forty horses

had fallen into their hands, and six dead men lay under the pines. Sam had well obeyed his order to bring "at least one prisoner."

Some further scouting showed them that no regular force was in the wood, and then the return was begun.

Carrington regretted that Jake Shelley had been among those who escaped, but, sooner or later, he hoped to square the old account.

The scouting party returned in triumph, and the young captain gained fresh renown. Mention was made in the official dispatches of his "brilliant dash," and Ziah took pains to spread the news how the captain won his way out of a close quarter.

## CHAPTER XI.

### ACROSS THE OPEQUON.

Early in September, General Sheridan completed his organization of the army, and was ready for an offensive movement, but Grant was not so ready to give consent. If the army fought and was defeated, it would be open to another invasion of Maryland and Pennsylvania, and the Lieutenant-general had not forgotten Antietam and Gettysburg.

The war must not again be carried to Northern soil.

On the sixteenth of September, however, the Union chieftains met at Charleston, and Sheridan unfolded his plans and explained all the points he had gained during his campaign with the consolidated army. A good deal of this information had come to him through Ziah Strout, and Grant himself knew from experience that the scout was a man who seldom made mistakes.

The result was that order, given in the terse fashion peculiar to the lieutenant-general, which expressed so much in few words.

"Go in!"

So said Grant, and Sheridan prepared to execute his well-considered direction.

The Union army was composed of the Sixth Corps, under General Wright, the Nineteenth under Emory, and the cavalry forces of Averill, Merritt, Wilson, and Trott. The Eighth Corps, under General Crook, was at Summit Point, and that, too, was to be brought into active service.

Previous to the advance, the army lay in front of Berryville, which is east of Winchester, and, in order to reach the latter place, must march through a country which bristled with dangers.

Between Opequon Creek and Winchester, was Early's army, and though inferior to the Union army in point of numbers, he had many a wood and hill where a stout stand could be made.

It was a hard region into which to venture, but the commanding general was not the man to be dismayed at trifles. He determined to advance, and few there were of his army who were not ready to follow willingly where he led.

On the eighteenth, two days after the interview with General Grant, Sheridan was informed that Ziah Strout had come into camp in a fever to see him; and the scout was soon admitted to his presence.

The big hand of the swamp man moved in an awkward salute, and then he abruptly broke the silence.

"Hope ain't disturbed you in any way, gine me, but I have news which I reckon will please you like sin."

"Then don't monopolize it any longer," said Sheridan, smiling.

"Early is swingin' his shooters funder north. He is chuckin' 'em into his left wing as a boy chucks in his vittles, an' a body would think Bunker Hill was full o' diamonds by the way he is wrapping about it."

Sheridan grew interested at once. When, little before, the Confederate general had thrown his left as far as Bunker Hill, it began to look as though he was himself considering an offensive movement, and Ziah's manner showed that he believed the new state of affairs to be of importance.

"Tell me briefly just what he has done," he directed.

"Waal, he has pushed a heavy force from Bunker Hill toward Martinsburg, an' I opine that he means to feel o' our forces. Ain't likely he means to desart his claim an' leave Winchester unguarded."

"No; but, as that is may, the significance of this movement, so far as we are concerned, lies in the fact that he is weakening his right by this new idea. Good that is just what we want. If I don't greatly mistake, the time for action is at hand. We

must cross the Opequon at once, and hurry on to Winchester. What do you think of the idea?"

"For a class, general, first class. The iron is hot; an' now is the time for strikin'."

Little more needed to be said. Sheridan saw his opportunity, and seized it with his usual promptness. Ziah was sent out on another scout, and activity ran all along the Union lines. They were to move early in the morning, and that evening they were put under arms.

Word was sent to Crook to join the main force at the Opequon ford, while Averill and Trott were to maneuver on Sorley's left sufficiently to engage his attention.

At three o'clock in the morning the forward movement was begun. Wilson's cavalry led the way, followed by the Sixth and Nineteenth Corps in order, and the Opequon was forded at daylight.

This stream lies four miles east of Winchester, and between the two points are broken and wooded hills which are admirably adapted for fortification.

On this road hard fighting was to be expected, for in no other place could Early

make a stand to save the city.

Ziah Strout had left the camp half an hour ahead of Wilson, and he at once proceeded to the ford to make sure that the way was clear.

All was peaceful about the place; and, after some scouting on both sides, he awaited the arrival of the army.

Wilson's men came up silently and in good order. Ziah looked at them admiringly as they approached, and his eyes glinted.

"Good stock, there," he muttered, "an' they will do a good bit o' slashin' afore the day is out."

On came the blue riders. The creek was safely crossed. Then they moved swiftly ahead, and soon neared a narrow pass where the hills frowned on either side.

Ziah looked at them suspiciously, and gave a word of caution. If the enemy were not there it would be strange.

They were there, and on the alert. No one could fail to see the advantage of such a region, and they were at hand.

It came with a rattle of teeth, and a gallant on, too; but the cavalry went forward with a dash, and the gorge was carried. Nor did they stop there.

One after another, each obstacle was met and removed until half the distance to Winchester was traveled.

There Wilson awaited for his comrades. The Sixth Corps came up promptly, but the Nineteenth had been unavoidably delayed, and it was full nine o'clock before the line of battle was formed.

For the moment, with Emory on the right, and Wright on the left, the latter having Wilson on his flank.

Meanwhile, Early had not been idle. He saw his danger, and made prompt action to avert it.

The reconnaissance to Martinsburg had been repulsed by Averill, and then these troops were hurried back toward Winchester, followed by the Union cavalry, which at once formed a junction with Merritt.

Northwest of the town are several detached hills, and upon these the Confederate force was posted, covering in their fortifications like grim guardians of the future of the Southern cause; while a large force was thrown forward for the purpose of breaking the Union line at the proper moment and preventing their retreat.

Ziah Strout, finding himself without occupation at this time, and inclined, as usual, to use his privilege of going where he pleased, left the Union center and moved along the rear toward Averill's position.

"I believe I kin get into them shucks this time," he soliloquized. "I sha'n't look so shuby as they do in their good clothes, but I reckon I kin fight."

The scout did not care to acknowledge the real reason, which was to be near Captain Carrington.

From the time when Sam, then a boy, had first come to him at his swamp cabin, he had regarded him with an affection which had increased with the passage of years. Nothing gave him more pride than to look upon the handsome officer in his uniform, and he expected much of him.

"With his mind dwelling on these matters, he was striding through the wood in his noiseless way, when he suddenly came upon a singular scene.

Two men, in the dress of Union soldiers,

were seated on a log, and engaged in a game of cards and the fact was so remarkable that Ziah was astonished.

He was given little time for reflection, however, for they quickly saw him in turn and suspended their playing.

One moment they looked, and he saw them mutter to themselves, and then they went coolly on with their game.

Ziah, however, was not disposed to leave on so short an acquaintance.

"Hello!" he said. "What are you doing here?"

"Playin' poker," one of them answered. "Take a hand, old man?"

"The gamester be played ter-day is *battle*," retorted the scout. "Why are you not at the front? Don't you know you are needed there? What regiment do you b'long ter?"

"Anything else you want ter know?" asked the man, calmly dealing the cards.

"Yes, that is. I want ter know why you are here with us?"

"Take a hand out in wantin'! Don't you worry about us, Mister Strout, or whatever your name is. You jest tend ter yer own business an' we kin look out for our'n. Eh, Ben?"

"That's the idea," the second man replied.

"It ain't the idea," retorted Ziah. "I don't propose ter see you chaps losin' byer when there is work ter do. Put up them keards an' scot for your places."

"Look ahyer, Strout, you're barkin' up the wrong tree. You ax what regiment we b'long to. We don't b'long ter any. We are free rangers, jest like you. We go an' come whar we please. Eh, Ben?"

"Right byee, Ben, was the prompt response.

"More nor that; we don't allow any man ter meddle with us. You hear me, mister? If you do, trot along an' mind your own business."

"Why are you in uniform if you don't b'long ter the army?" was the suspicion inquiry.

"Waal, yer see we found some o' the boys dead back a ways, an' as we thought our help might be needed, we swapped out fits with them."

The words gave Ziah a key to the exact situation.

These men were vagabonds, vagrants, robbers of the dead, and the like—a class of men all too apt to hang on the rear of an army, and feast like vultures when there is food. The uniforms had been gained by robbery, and no doubt there was a stock of money in their pockets obtained the same way.

## CHAPTER XII.

### WINCHESTER.

"I see," cried Ziah, soorly; "you ain't sojers; that is very clear. You are carrion crows, that live by robbin' the dead. I don't know any words mean enough ter describe you. Lord, you oughter ter be hung ter a tree, an' I kin do half a mind ter try a little shootin' on you."

"Don't try it," said Ben, warily, reaching for the rifle near his back.

But Ziah's own weapon came up quickly, and with a double click he covered the fellow's head.

"Hold up!" he sharply said. "Ef you teches that shooter, out go your brains. You hear me? That's right; keep quiet and steady."

Ben and Ben, as the men had called each other, glared at him fiercely.

They were mad enough to do mischief, but they lacked the courage.

"Lower that weepin', you old fool, or I'll—"

Dan paused in his hot address.

"What'll you do?" the scout grimly asked.

"I'll knock out your brains."

"How'll you do it?"

The robbers glared at him in silence. They had the will to kill him, but they knew that one movement would seize their own weapons and doom them.

"Waal, what's you goin' ter do?"

"Nothin'," growled Dan. "Lower yer rifle an' march on. We don't want no trouble."

"Wait a bit," said Ziah, steadily. "I ain't done with you yet. When I see a serpent, I generally crush his head. You two fellers fit into that category."

The robbers demurred, but the scout was firm as a rock. He punctuated his remarks by tapping his rifle breech, and after some delay his order was obeyed.

"Now," he grimly added, "take off them uniforms which do not b'long ter you. Undo 'em!"

Dan uttered a snarl of rage. The order was too much for his mental composure, and

a torrent of oaths began to pour from his lips. "Ziah interrupted him sternly. He had advanced to the log, and with both their rifles at his side was completely master of the situation.

"Not one word," he ordered. "Undress!" "We won't," declared Dan. "We aren't goin' ter—"

"Oby or swaller lead," tersely interrupted the scout.

Ben, who was the weakest of the two, hurriedly began to disrobe, and a little more persuasion of the foregoing kind impressed Dan so strongly that he followed.

The doffing off of the uniforms showed that they had another suit underneath, and though these were citizens' garments and well advanced toward the ragpicker's standard, the change left them more appropriately clad than before.

They were evil, hang-dog looking fellows, and "Ziah was hawdly chuckling at his victory.

Having gained his point he picked up both rifles, threw the uniforms over his arm, and resumed his way.

"Hold on!" said Dan. "Give us back our rifles."

"Nary time. Men like you don't need 'em. Keep cool an' let your wool grow."

Once more Dan indulged in his vicious hobby, and then, with a final look after "Ziah, but when the latter wheeled and raised his gun the scavenger abruptly retreated.

The scout went on, chuckling at the way he had served the two ruffians. In all the records of military life there is nothing so repulsive as the class represented by Dan and Ben. They hang upon the rear of an army, when they are about at all, and after a day or two are seen no more among the dead to secure a valuable plunder.

These two wretches, who will again appear in our story, were Northern born and bred, one being from New England and the other from one of the Middle States, and their record was a dark one. They had flourished as bounty jumpers and wholesale robbers for some time, and their luck was such that their misdeeds were never traced to "Ziah.

Not far did the latter carry his plunder, but finding a hollow log, he shoved the rifles and uniforms inside and fastened on to join Averill's command.

He was yet some distance from that place when he was surprised at meeting Captain Carrington in the wood. The latter was on his way to gain word with Sheridan, and as this business would admit of no delay, "Ziah turned back and unaccompanied him, going as fast on foot as Sam's horse could move through the underbrush.

Thus they arrived at the Union center just as the first real assault was made.

Sheridan had perceived that the Confederate right was too strongly posted to be successfully assaulted, and all active attention was turned on the center and left. The way was rough one, for the boys in blue must charge up the wooded hill, through a narrow pass, and it could not be a fatal charge for many of them.

The honor of leading the way was given to Ricketts' division, with Grover's close behind, and they started up the ascent with an impetuous rush.

A terrible fire at once greeted them from the heights beyond the pass. Shot and shell whizzed over their heads or bore through their ranks, and brave men fell thickly by the way, but those who survived were not made of common clay, and they pressed gallantly on.

They struck Early's center with resistless force, and his first line was carried amid cheers from the assailants.

Carrington had delivered his message, and with "Ziah was standing at the mouth of the pass through which the boys in blue had just swept.

The scout plucked off his cap and waved it wildly in the air. He cheered and the top of his voice, and then added:

"Ah! ain't it a big day? Hurrah for the screamin' eagle! Cavalry Sam, could your sashers her die better? Oh! they are just a dray load of hell."

"It was well done," said Sam, with enthusiasm. "It was very well done, but the end is not yet. Early is wide awake and will soon show his talons."

"Not to-day," said the scout. "The end is already begun, an' you will see them all go ter pieces. Our boys know their business—an'—"

"Ziah paused abruptly. There was some sort of commotion at the front of the Union line. They seemed to waver, but the cause was still uncertain. Then, from behind rock and tree came the Confederates in a

counter charge, and two full divisions were hurled upon the exhausted men of Ricketts and Grover.

"By heaven! they are in serious danger," said the scout. "Did I not tell you Early would show his talons? Worse than that—! Ha! yes, our men waver and turn. They will be driven back, and if the Confederates seize this pass, woe be to our cause!"

The boys in gray were indeed taking their turn, and they took it in a convincing way. Their wild charge beat back the Union troops, who turned and began a disorderly retreat, passing through the gap, where fire from the flank dropped meat at every step.

"Lord! lord!" muttered "Ziah, in consternation, "the day is lost, sure as sin!"

They stood irresolutely, until the van of the flying men was almost beside them. Then suddenly, a dozen brave men turned and faced the enemy. It seemed as though they must be speedily swept away, but their shields were held high. Sam Carrington to action.

Throwing up his arms, he sprang forward to meet the flying troops, and his voice rang out clearly.

"Back, men, back!" he said. "One bold stand here and the day is saved!"

Some there were who heard and obeyed him, and with "Ziah and himself took position near the first brave men, and the number increased rapidly.

At that instant, two guns of Captain Bradbury's Maine Battery were placed in position in the gap, and turned upon the Confederates, and a moment later the One Hundred and Thirty-first New York regiment poured in a telling volley from a wood at the enemy's rear.

All this created a strong ripple in favor of the Unionists, and the broken lines rapidly formed.

A deadly volley of musketry checked and wavered the boys in gray, and then the men in the pass cheered again as the Confederates broke and fled.

The line of battle was reformed, and was really stronger than ever. The men had not suffered any paralyzing loss in numbers, and their success had given them courage and ardor.

Once more General Wright<sup>4</sup> had the Union line in front of his men, and the Captain of the Cavalry on the right, with Merritt and Averill at the northern extremity, and not much time was lost in again moving forward.

Then ensued the heat of the battle. General Early had chosen his second position well, and was resolved to hold it, for if he was again driven back it would be to a point unpleasantly near Winchester.

For hours the thunder of battle awoke the echoes around the old town. Men fought and men died, gallant deeds were performed, and the sturdy soldiers grew dark with smoke and dust. This continued until four o'clock, when there was a general movement forward.

Cavalry Sam and "Ziah had returned to the Union right, and were doing their parts; and when horse and foot were hurled on Early's left they went with the tumultuous rush.

Assailed thus, and heavily stricken on their center, the Confederates broke and fled, stopping only when they reached the fortified heights in the very teeth of Winchester.

It was during this charge that Sam Carrington saw a startling sight.

The enemy's left had begun to waver, when a regiment in gray suddenly showed a more resolute front. A young officer in the dress of a colonel had dashed along their ranks, regardless of musket balls, and as he bawled his sword the men responded by a cheer.

"Up and at 'em, boys!" shouted a Union officer. "It is Penrock's regiment!"

Sam had not needed the assertion. Despite the lapse of years, he had already recognized the young colonel, and he knew it was the Alfred Penrock of the old days.

He had been a tall, gaunt youth, and the regiment in gray was swept from sight, many of them going down never to rise.

What became of the gallant colonel he could not tell, for the retreat had become almost a panic.

The heights did not long stay the boys in blue. Once more they struck heavily, the fortifications were carried, and Early's army was driven back, and then down in retreat, their faces toward Strasburg.

The victorious army continued the pursuit until dark, and the spoils of war were many. Early did not halt until he reached Fisher's

<sup>4</sup>Captain Rigby, and men of the Twenty-fourth Iowa Regiment.

Hill—a position so strong that it was advisable to make some delay before attacking.

On the hands of the Unionists were many prisoners, several pieces of artillery, and numerous battle-flags.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### FISHER'S HILL.

That night, General Sheridan rested at a house on the corner of Braddock and Piccadilly streets, in Winchester, from which place he sent his famous message to the Government at Washington:

"We have just sent the enemy marching through Winchester, and are now in pursuit to-morrow."

During the last of the battle, "Ziah Strout had been riding with Averill's "slashers." It had been easy to get a horse, for many of them had lost their riders, and from that time the scout was always near to Sam Carrington. Whether fighting or galloping in pursuit, he watched his old-time friend closely, and ever and anon a chuckle broke from his lips.

"Ever' man was made fur a soldier," he said, with pardonable pride.

That night, he sought him, as they rested after their severe work.

"Et's been a good day," said the scout, placidly; "a proper good day. We've done more fur the Shenandoah to-day than has been done for years afore. We've captured the whole o' Winchester, an' the eend is not yet."

"It will take desperate fighting to capture Fisher's Hill. You and I know that ground well, "Ziah, and we can command the judgment of Early in taking the position."

"We must fight like sin ter captur' it; but I reckon we are the boys ter do it. Lord there has been some pretty fightin' to-day."

Sam was silent for a moment, and when he spoke it was briefly.

"The war is takin' us very near the old home, "Ziah. It would not be at all strange if we tramped over the very acres we once trod when peace was through the land."

"Very likely we will; an' ef so, you will see many o' the old places left intact. Warburton's house still stands, an' so does Alfred Penrock's."

"I would like to see Augusta and Vida."

"Don't see why you can't, fur we shall cipher arround hyer fur some time ter come, I reckon."

At that moment a messenger came to summarize them to a superior officer, and they went promptly.

They were wanted for a scout. A negro had just come in, and reported that a body of the enemy was being formed on a wooded hill about four miles away, and though the report was not credited, it was advisable to investigate.

Our friends had been chosen because the country was so well known to them.

They were soon in the saddle, and riding toward the point of suspicion, and the intervening space was covered in a short time. When the base of the ridge was reached they dismounted, and concealed their horses in a thicket, and went forward on foot.

There was no necessity for them to go in company, so they separated in order to do their work more speedily. Neither of them expected to find anything more than a few stragglers on the ridge.

Let us follow Captain Carrington. He had crossed the hill once or twice in the past, when he was a boy, and he had a pretty fair idea of the country; and assuming the secret way he had learned years before from "Ziah, he glided through the bushes and around rocks with scarcely a sound to betray his movements.

His half of the northern side of the ridge was soon explored, and nothing suspicious found.

By that time he was at the western extremity, and he at once rounded the point and moved along the southern side. If nothing was found, he and "Ziah would soon join each other.

Not many yards had he gone, however, when he heard the sound of voices. He had just entered a group of pines, and the speakers were directly ahead.

By that time Sam knew that no army was forming on those there; but it might be well to look after them in case of a party.

He crept forward on his hands and knees, the droppings from the pine branches being so thick as to deaden every sound, and then a little twisting about gave him the desired view.

The night was but moderately dark, though it would have been impenetrably so in the pines had it not been for one cause. In a little space between the towering trees

half a dozen men were collected in a group, and all smoking, and by the fiery-like gleams thus produced, he could see them plainly enough for his purpose.

Early he had arrived just in the nick of time, for the first words he heard were of importance.

"You're a good feller, Jake Shelley, a mighty good feller, and I'd like to stop with you longer, but business is business, you know, and these dispatches must go to General Lee. That's all that can save Early's army."

"Then I won't keep you, but you must take a bottle of this wine with you. Such stuff don't grow on every bush, an' I'm right glad that ole fool in Winchester was so careful on't. Drink agin, an' be happy, my good man."

"Drink it is, Jake, early an' often. I'm glad I stumbled onto you. Here goes!"

A gurgling sound followed, and he began to comprehend a good deal of the state of affairs. One man in front of him was a messenger started by General Early to warn Lee, perhaps to ask for reinforcements, and another was Jacob Shelley. Doubtless the others were followers of the guerrilla.

In point of fact, the villainous Shelley had seized his opportunity to do some plundering in Winchester that afternoon, and he and his men were filling themselves with wine when the dispatch-bearer chanced upon them. Being an old acquaintance, he had received an invitation to stop, and, already, he had taken more than was good for him.

While he drank, Sam was thinking rapidly. One of these men had dispatched of importance. If they reached Lee, good might come to the Confederate cause; if they did not, it would be to Sheridan's great advantage.

They must be stopped.

A little later the messenger prepared to depart. He said good-by, effusively, to Jake Shelley, and then mounted his horse, which had been tied near at hand, and started away, through the gully and up the ridge.

Meanwhile, Sam had crawled away from the same locality and was walking slowly along the ridge. He intended to attack the messenger, but it was necessary to allow him time to ride beyond Shelley's hearing. That much of the plan was not difficult. The way was too rough for trotting, and the Unionist had only to watch his man and keep just in advance.

Anon, as the horseman was passing, a sharp arrow from the cover of the bushes struck and unseated his rein, and at the same time a revolver was thrust forward so that it covered his breast.

"Halt!" said Cavalry Sam, promptly.

"You are my prisoner, sir, and you had better take it coolly."

It was good advice, but the messenger did not seem inclined to obey. His lips framed an oath and his hand dropped on his saber, but Sam spoke again.

"Stop!" he said, authoritatively. "Make a move to draw a weapon and, by my life, I'll shoot you."

"He means business an' I'm hyer ter back him," said another voice, and Ziah glided forward.

"Who the devil are you?" roared the messenger.

"Not quite so loud; it's not safe for you. Who are we? Well, we are Sheridan's scouts, and you are wanted at camp. Will you surrender quietly?"

For answer, the man attempted to draw his saber, but Sam leaped forward, caught him by the arm and, and in the moment more, dragged him from his saddle.

Then the work was quickly done. Laying hold of him together, they bound him up in quick order. He kicked and swore, as is duty bound, but the tide was against him, and he was soon helpless as a babe.

Ziah did not know why he was wanted, but he entered heartily into Sam's plans. Having rendered their prisoner helpless, they again seated him on his horse and turned their faces toward the top of the ridge.

It was crossed, their own horses secured, and the return to camp began. No adventure occurred by the way, and at an early hour the dispatch-bearer was landed at headquarters.

His papers proved to be of importance. They gave an account of the recent battle, together with valuable figures, and besought aid from General Lee.

On the whole, the capture was a lucky

one, and the scouts were deservedly complimented by their superior officers.

Sheridan kept his promise to be after Early as soon as possible, and on the twenty-second he moved on Fisher's Hill. Every one expected hard fighting before the place was carried, for it was one admirably adapted for defense.

Lying at the mouth of Strasburg Valley, its base washed by one fork of the Shenandoah River, it lay between the North Mountain and Massanutton ranges, and had done all that was possible for the Confederates.

Sheridan found Early's army with its right strongly entrenched at this place, and its left reaching as far as North Mountain. He saw his chance, and improved it.

Crook's corps was sent to gain the rear of the weak left, and Wright and Emory advanced against the front of the left and center.

Averill's cavalry had been thrown forward near the base of North Mountain, and Carrington and Ziah had no doubt but that they were to see the enemy swept from their new position.

They had given a good deal of valuable information, enabling the Union leaders to work for good advantage, and the recent victory at Winchester had filled every man with enthusiasm.

Hostilities began in earnest at four o'clock in the afternoon.

Under cover of an attack from the cavalry, the Union footmen swept forward in an impetuous assault on the enemy's left, and North Mountain was carried with a rush, and the Confederates swept away.

At the same time the whole front had been assailed, and even Fisher's Hill, with its intrenchments, proved of no avail.

The strong works were carried, and then ensued another race up the valley.

They were followed in force to Port Republic, and by cavalry to Staunton, but at that point they found refuge in the Blue Ridge mountains, and were temporarily saved.

The war was booming in the Shenandoah Valley, however, and glad news flashed along the Northern wires.

#### CHAPTER XIV. IN THE SADDLE.

After these last engagements, Sheridan and his entire army marched down the valley to execute an order given by his superior officer that "nothing be left to invite the enemy to return;" and that the order was well executed is evidenced by his official report. He says:

"We have destroyed over five thousand barrels, filled with wheat, hay, and farming implements, and over seventy miles filled with flour, and wheat; have driven in front of this army over four thousand head of cattle, and have issued to the troops not less than three thousand sheep."

This compact sentence has more importance than is at first perceptible; for where crops grow and are harvested, there are men, and no man likes to stand by and see the fruits of his toil consumed by the fire.

Added to the troubles from Early's army, which though broken, was not spirit-crushed, the Unionists were continually beset by the people. To quote again from Sheridan's report:

"Every train, every small party, and every straggler, had been bushwhacked by the people; many of whom have protection papers."

Wherever the Union raiders moved, hostile eyes were upon them.

Men hid in swamps and amid rocky hills, ready to do what mischief they could, and it was no rare thing for a solitary rifle-shot to echo out over the air, perhaps sending death to a rider, after which the concealed marksman would flee or hide.

So much in explanation of what is to follow.

Both Generals Sheridan and Averill had come to think very well of Sam Carrington. To his knowledge of the country, he added the dashing bravery which was notable characteristic of both those great cavalry leaders. As far as he was a Virginian by birth, they had almost seen his devotion to the Union cause sufficiently tested.

Thus it was that, while making the memorable swoop through the valley, Averill one day gave fifty men to Cavalry Sam, and instructed him to ride to the plantation of a man named Eager, and apply the torch to his barn.

This deed had already been attempted by a smaller force, but they had been beaten off by bushwhackers with severe loss.

Carrington, riding at the head of his force, with Ziah Stroud by his side, found plenty of food for reflection.

"I'm afraid it's bringin' me very near the old home," he said to the scout.

"It will, sure as sin. Eager's is about three miles, as the crow flies, from all the old places—my cabin in the swamp, your old house, and Warburton's."

"My old home," you should say. I am told that not a stick is left of the house."

"I'm afraid that Warburton's will go the same way."

"Not by the will of our leaders. We have orders to spare those buildings, thank Heaven."

"Good enough. But why?"

"There are several reasons. Vida Warburton is known to be loyal; nothing of importance has been harvested this year, and there are no males about the place, except two or three negroes who have come to the family through all their troubles. There is little there to invite our men."

"I needn't tell you that Eager's was killed at Fisher's Hill. Is that so?"

"Yes; he was shot dead in the intrenchments. He was the last of the family, which makes me less reluctant to do the work we now have in hand. It seems that a gang of bushwhackers have taken possession of his old house and are trying to live in clover. It will be our work to drive them away, and then fire the barn."

"That's easy done." Sam reflected into silence.

I wonder what if the events of the next few days did not in some way bring him in contact with the Warburton sisters; indeed, I fully intended to see them if duty would permit.

How he would be received was uncertain. Augusta and he had always been good friends before the beginning of the war; in fact, knew her father had hoped for a closer tie, and he was not sure but what their own minds ran in the same channel until the first gun at Fort Sumter separated them so widely.

As for Vida, who must now be a young lady, she had always been an admirer of the old-time "Mad Sam," and when trouble came she had not only spoken for the Union with girlish enthusiasm, but had sent a note of warning to Sam when he was menaced by the rioters.

Still, many years had passed—years of war, trouble, change and hardship—and he was not certain how the ladies would feel toward him.

In due time the little band emerged from a wood, and the Eager house a hundred yards distant. In times of peace it had been a prosperous place. The owner had been frugal even to penuriousness, and the dollars had gathered swiftly in his hands; but war had struck the plantation, its master was numbered among the dead of Fisher's Hill, and the owners were at hand to apply the torch to the building which held the hay and grain.

To all appearances barn and house were deserted; not even a dog, that feature of all Southern buildings, was visible; but Captain Carrington was not so sure that they had the place to themselves.

The bushwhackers had been there a few hours before, and though it was probable they had been wise enough to take themselves out of danger's way, there was nothing to indicate it.

Barn and house were fifty yards apart, and the boys in blue marched at once toward the latter and halted a few paces away. Then Sam dismounted, went to the door, and rapped sharply.

No answer was returned; no sound was audible, except that made by his own movements.

Twice he repeated the summons, and then tried the door, but it was fastened on the inside.

"Bust it in," suggested Ziah.

"We will try the windows first. I do not like to do any further damage than is necessary."

"Then why not leave the house alone and fire the barn ter onct?"

"Because there may be men within the house who would put out the fire as soon as possible. Go around to the left, Ziah, and I will meet you on the opposite side."

They separated and went in search of unfastened windows. Ziah found everything tightly closed, but as he did not meet Sam at the rear he concluded he had had better luck, and went on to find him.

The captain was not at the western end, however, and when Ziah turned the next corner the men sat idly, on their horses and their leader were invisible.

"Whar's Captain Carrington?" he asked, in surprise.

"Went around that way a minute ago," said one of the men, pointing as he spoke.

"Aint you seed him sence?"

"Nah."

The scout retraced his steps. Everything was as he had first found it, and he again made the circuit without finding the missing man.

"Blamed it aint queer," said Ziah. "Hyer, two or three o' you critters hop down an' help me. Captain Sam must have gone in, though he did it in a mysterious way. I got around the old ark an' try evry whidder."

The direction was promptly obeyed, but the bluecoats found the house securely fastened at every point, and when they met them looked at Strout, inquiringly.

"Summit is wrong," he tersely said. "The cap'n has gone inside, but I'm mighty afeard he didn't go in good order."

"Mebbe he fastened the winder behind him for a joke," suggested one of the cavalrymen.

"Bab! that aint his way. Hyer, you slashers, put your shoulders agin the door an' we'll bust her in."

The first part of the order was obeyed, but their united efforts failed to move the door. It was of good material and seemed remarkably well secured on the other side.

Ziah was nervous. The fear was strong in his mind that bushwhackers were inside the house, and that Sam was their prisoner; and, raising his rifle, he shattered glass and sash of the nearest window, and the way was open.

A curtain hung limply on the inside, but one wrench tore it down and he saw an empty room. Looking around, he motioned to two other men to join the four already in his service, and one after the other they entered through the breach.

"Kaint you boys ready, boyees?" enquired the scout, "fur I'm c'mmost sure we shall have a brush. That's gray inside sure as shootin'!"

Yet, as they moved from room to room, only the same sight met their view—scantily furnished apartments and no human tenants. The first floor was quickly examined and the second investigated, but still no sign of Cavalry Sam or the bushwhackers.

"They ain't here," said one of the soldiers, blankly.

"You furgit the suller," said Ziah, grimly. "Thar's a lamp; we will have a light an' go down."

The idea was quickly neld upon, and they descended a flight of narrow stairs. All was superlatively dark below, and the lamp, an old whale-oil affair, only served to make the fact more apparent.

One or two of the soldiers showed a disposition to act as rear guards, but the scout, though fully convinced that trouble was at hand, was not a man to shrink from darkness.

His actual courage was not then tested. Investigation showed an ordinary cellar, but it failed to show signs that any human being except themselves had been there for some time.

Ziah paused, when the search was completed, and looked blankly at his companion.

"Wal, by thunder!" he ejaculated.

"There's nobody here," the bluecoat slowly said.

"Then, where is Captain Carrington?" a second man asked.

"That's what I want ter know," said the scout, quickly. "Have any o' you slashers an' riders seen o' his build don't vanish inter this smoke nor sink inter the earth. Whar is Cavalry Sam?"

It was a very pertinent question, but one not easily answered. His disappearance smacked somewhat of the marvelous, and theories were not plentiful.

At that moment, however, the house seemed almost shaken by a tremendous knocking at the door, a sharp halloo! was added, and Strout's face brightened.

"He's back, sure as sun," was his comment.

They ran up the stairs together, but as they did so several shots were heard, mingled with renewed shouts, and Ziah ran to the broken window with a fresh fear assailing him.

The outside scene had changed materially. The bluecoats were no longer visible, but in

their place was an equally large body of men who wore Confederate gray.

## CHAPTER XV. CLOSE QUARTERS.

The sight startled and amazed Amazab for a moment, but he was not long in comprehending the state of affairs. He remembered the knocking at the door and the first shouts, and it was evident that the bluecoats had been surprised and driven off by a superior force of the boys in gray.

For a moment, he could hear the report of muskets off at the west, and he knew the Union men were in rapid retreat.

He swept his handful of men back from the window.

"Keep out of sight!" he ordered. "The enemy may not know anybody is inside, an' we can't whip 'em we will try the effect o' hidin'."

He moved hurriedly to the western window, and as he had expected, saw the Unionists in retreat, closely followed by the Confederate cavalry. The latter had such a superiority of numbers that the few who had stayed by the house were not needed for the pursuit.

If Ziah really expected them to leave the house unnoticed, he was soon undeceived. A sharp knocking commenced at the door, and the servants looked to Ziah for advice and directions.

He walked to a window near the broken one, brushed the curtain a little aside, and looked out. Upwards of a score of gray riders sat grimly on their horses, while the one who was knocking at the door wore the uniform of a captain.

Ziah knew that they would not be satisfied with the pulse he unsearched. That much was certain. The next thing in order was the question, what would become of the Unionists when such a search was made? Clearly, there was not room enough in the house for two parties of such antagonistic tendencies. They must be kept out or—

In event of a resistance, the bluecoats could make a stout fight, but the probability of a defeat at the end made such a course a last desperate resort. Under the circumstances, it would be better to hide than to fight.

The scout thought of the barn and ran to the window looking out upon it. The way was clear; no Confederate stood in the path of retreat, and Ziah resolved to make the attempt.

He spoke to the bluecoats and they caught on at once. It was a true one, with the clefts between them, but it was the proverbial straw of the drowning man.

One after another, and with remarkable agility, they sprung through the window. Once on the ground, Ziah cast a longing glance toward the southern wood, but it was a mile distant and not to be considered. The barn was their only chance.

Breaking into a run, they made a dash for the stable. For forty yards the corner of the house concealed them from the view of the Confederates, but as they neared the barn, the scout looked around and plainly saw the whole squad of graycoats.

It was a thrilling moment. If one of their enemies chanced to observe them as they ran, their hopes would indeed be desperate; but, tired of knocking, the boys in gray were at that moment engaged in forcing an entrance, and no one saw the fleeing Unionists.

The barn was reached and safely entered. It was of the usual pattern, and well filled with hay and grain. Its owner had harvested his crops and then hastened to join Early's army only to find a grave at Fisher's Hill.

"Now," said the scout, "it's our policy to hide as long as we can", if dislodged, to fight like sin. Get up on the hay now, two or three of ye, while the rest on us watches the grays. Mebbe they won't disturb us at all."

"They won't let the premises go unsearched," said one of the cavalrymen, decidedly.

"Likely they won't, but we won't squeal until we're forced to."

The Ziah watched the Confederates from a crack between the boards, and he saw some of them enter by the window and afterward open the door. A little time elapsed, which was probably devoted to searching the interior, and then the privates of the command settled down around the cabin, and the officers seemed to be making themselves comfortable inside.

The probability of further trouble was so great that Ziah began to consider the feas-

bility of slipping out of the barn by the rear and making an attempt to gain the woods, a rather desperate idea, since so wide a field must be crossed; but at that moment there was movement among the grays which assumed painful interest to the handful of Unionists.

A dozen of the former left their companions and advanced toward the barn, and one of the soldiers grasped Ziah's arm nervously.

"They are coming to search here," he said.

"Mebbe, an', possibly, only ter see what they hear her for folder. Get ter the haymow, out o' the house, an' sashay down deep in the kiver. We musn't be found."

Leaving them to carry out their idea, let us return for a while to the house.

The force which had come upon and scattered the Union cavalrymen was two hundred strong, and led by a Confederate colonel. He had himself gone in pursuit of the fugitives, leaving fifty men under a captain to guard the house; and this captain, enjoying his brief authority, was resolved to make the most of it.

When the search of the house had failed to reveal any occupants, he had not a suspicion that any of the Unionists were near; so he went in accompanied by a surgeon and a corporal, who were the only officers with him, and proceeded to make himself at home.

He settled down in the best room, and then, lacking servants, sent two privates to explore for eatables. They explored, but nothing except hopelessly dried bread was found. Still, there was joy behind the sorrow. Down in the cellar they found a lot of bottled wine, and when this was brought up, the eyes of the captain fairly sparkled.

"Ha! ha! how is this, doctor? We demand a bottle. There is not a thousand ye old, more or less, and we will fit it—form'd medicine, you know. Ha! see it sparkle. Now, then, isn't this better than chasing the invaders across the country?"

"If my opinion is worth anything, I should say, 'yea, verily,'" the surgeon replied, spurring on to facetiousness by the state of affairs. "Hustle around, men, and find a ockerseed."

"Hush the corkscrew!" said the captain.

"Such toys are not for soldiers." He struck the neck of the bottle against the table, neatly decapitating it, and then the bottom of the treasure went up in the air, and the wine began to trickle down his throat.

His companions were not far behind, but on the eve of tasting, the surgeon paused.

"What hast thou there?" Our general, here, is a glutton, and he will rob us if he can. Drink early and often."

No more was said until each man had emptied his bottle, and then the captain began to sashay his lips.

"Prime stuff," he commented. "Very likely the nectar of the gods. Old Eager, or whatever his name was, was a true patriot. He done one thing for the Southern cause. I'd nudrize to his memory."

"You are our superior officer; we dare not disobey," answered the jovial surgeon.

Down went the second round, and the last speaker began to feel the effects of his potations. He arose and began to go through the steps of some dance with slow movements and awful dignity.

He was fat and clumsy, and his friends began to laugh immoderately, all of which pleased him well, but when he saw the two privates indulging in smiles and winks at each other, he grew angry and hurled the empty bottles at them, one after another. The last crashed against the door, for they had been an unceremonious retreat, and then the surgeon slammed the door together and bawled it.

"We are waiting for you, doctor," said the captain, with a yawn.

The doctor's antics being over, he began to realize that he was sleepy.

Once more they drank around, and then the doctor had a funny story to tell. He elevated his heels on the table and began the yarn.

He had often told it before, and to admiring audiences, but somehow, on this occasion, it seemed dull and stupid to himself, at least, and he frequently paused to yawn.

Having finished, he looked around for the customary applause, but none came. Both his companions had settled back in their chairs, and were, to all appearances, fast asleep.

He started in surprise, but, just then, being caught by another irresistible yawn, he realized that he was himself far gone on the same road.

"ounds!" he ejaculated, "that wine affects me tremendously. It must have been bottled for at least a thousand years, as Pratt said. By Jove! I'll find a bed, and take a nap. Where did I see one? Oh, in this way, I think."

He arose and reeled toward the door, staggering as he went. He moved like a drunken man, and yet he was one who seldom lost his feet. Some time was occupied in manipulating the latch before he succeeded in opening the door, but when he entered and saw the bed, he felt well rewarded.

Evidently it had been occupied quite recently, for the clothing was in disorder, but he was not in a very particular frame of mind. He raised his heavy form and dropped upon it with a sigh of relief.

Then, spreading his ample form well out, he pillow'd his head and uttered a chuckle.

"This is better than chasing the enemy."

So here the surgical man, but, sleepy as he was, he felt a huge bunch under the clothing, which blunted the edge of his pleasure somewhat.

He gave the clothes a vicious wrench, but the bunch was still there.

"Hang it!" he said, "I ought to have a servant to make the bed. Wonder if I can straighten it myself?"

He swung his feet off the bed, but as he attempted to stand erect, lost his balance and fell that on the floor.

He was scarcely down when the bed-clothes became agitated at the very point where the hard bunch had been. They trembled, heaved upward, and then a bundle of something in blue rolled out from between them, dropped over the back of the bed, and sought cover underneath.

All this had been quickly done, but the moving object looked strangely like a man in Union uniform.

"Reckon I'm pretty drunk," muttered the surgeon, as he gained his knees, "but if the bed won't hold me, the floor will. I'll sleep under instead of on top of it?"

all likely I am pleased," Sam promptly answered.

"Reckoned you wouldn't be," said the man, with a chuckle. "But, see yere! Your cutthroats are comin' inside, an' we want yer lay low while they are hyer. So I must ask you ter keep your mouth shut, an' I'll tell that if you give any alarm I will blow your brains out."

"Rest easy; I shall give no alarm," Sam declared.

"Good. Now, see that you keep your word, for we mean business from a to z."

The speaker turned away, and fixed his gaze upon a table at one side of the room. Upon it were ten or a dozen bottles of some liquid which looked like wine, and beside them sat two more, which were empty.

"Cain boys," he continued, "we may as well finish this feast while we can. We may be prisoners in five minutes; an' I swear them bluecoats are goin' ter have this wine."

His companions applauded his sentiment in a subdued manner, and all sat down at the table and began to drink.

Bottles were broken and emptied rapidly, and by the time the first sounds from without the room announced that Ziah and his friends had gained an entrance, the wine was rapidly disappearing.

Carrington sat helplessly and listened. He heard the voices of men making their search, but clung not cast his eyes.

His captors were men who valued life lightly, and they would surely keep their word if he sounded an alarm.

But, as their feast went on, he was pleased to see that the wine was hitting them hard.

They grew dull of look, yawned frequently, and seemed fast falling into the meshes of intoxication.

At last, one man laid his head on the table and ceased operations. To all appearances, he was asleep. His evident comfort excited another so much that he lay down on the floor, and soon quieted.

Others followed their lead, and then Cavalry Sam sat in wonder, and looked to see the whole gang apparently dead drunk.

He did not venture to stir for some time, for he feared that they were shamming—it must either be that, or else the wine was remarkably powerful—but their heavy breathing at last vanished his fears.

He shuffled his feet, but none of them moved.

"By Jupiter!" he thought, "I believe they are all gone. If they are, I'm going to get out of this. But now, I'm hardly safe to call to Ziah; and, I don't hear any sounds from him. I don't know but he has left the house. I reckon I had better play a lone hand, and I'm inclined to think I can easily get out of these bonds. I'll try!"

He suited the action to the word, and the thoughts hurriedly tied, did not long resist his great strength. They fell off, and his hands were free, after which he was not long in liberating his feet.

"Now, then, for liberty," he added, to himself.

He glided to the door, removed the fastenings and opened it. Only the secretary lay between him and freedom.

Pausing for a moment, he looked back and saw his own weapons where the bushwhackers had laid them.

It would not do to leave them behind, so he retraced his steps, secured them, and went again to the door.

The door was easily removed, and he stood alone in the outer room. The sound of voices from that adjoining it reached his ears, and he was about to abruptly open the door and surprise Ziah, when caution came to his aid.

Once while in the prison-room, he had thought he heard the sound of muskets, so he resolved to go slow.

Opening the door a trifle, he looked through and saw three men in Confederate gray seated in the table. They were the captain, the corporal, and the surgeon, and he gained his view when the latter had just decided that he had better seek a bed.

Sam saw the bottles on the table, and, even then, he decided that there must be something wrong about the wine. It had affected the men more like drugged spirits than according to the way of intoxication.

The reflections on that subject came to an end when the speaker turned toward the door, and it became evident that he must at once get out of sight. "Where could he go? Not back into the prison-room; so only one room remained in which to hide."

"The bed!" he thought. "This man will

probably return to his companions in a moment; the bed will hide me."

And thus it was that, when the surgeon lay down and took his rest, so uneven, Cavalry Sam was at the bottom of his trouble—and of the bed-clothing.

When the former lost his balance, and fell to the floor, the blue bundle that whisked over the edge of the bed was the same Sam in his uniform.

He imagined he had gained a point by his change of base, but the sleepy surgeon soon overcame his, and his muscular power on the wane, he decided to sleep under the bed instead of on it again.

So under he went, drawing his corpulent form to cover without regard to dignity, and Sam squirmed back tightly against the wall in an attempt to keep out of his way.

"I will pillow my head on a soldier's bed," quoth the surgeon, unconsciously falling into a trite; and with these words, he laid the attorney down upon Sam's manly breast.

The doctor was well pleased for he had referred to the bare floor; but it had roused a trifle. Sam's fingers closed over his throat.

"You've mistaken the number of your room, old man," said the Unionist. This hotel believes in accommodation, but not too much of it."

The Confederate began to squirm in a lively way, but the grip on his neck was a resolute one, and Sam held him where he was wanted.

Confusion reigned in the doctor's mind; but he was too far gone to get a clear idea of the situation, and after a little mental anxiety, the captain saw that he was actually failing to sleep in his hands.

The bottled wine was working well.

Five minutes passed, and the surgeon was out of the race. He lay prostrate, breathing heavily, and Sam drew him fully under the bed and prepared to look after his own interests.

Creeping from under cover, he moved about the cabin and looked the field over.

In the front room the two officers still slept, and around the building the other soldiers were collected, taking their ease while they waited.

"How the dickens am I to get out of this?" mentally inquired the Unionist. "The fellows have evidently driven off my boys in order to improve my chances of being found large. What next?"

While he reflected, a footfall behind him caused him to wheel abruptly, and he looked around to see one of the bushwhackers standing before him.

He had left the fellow sleeping in the prison-room, but he had thrown off his stupor, and now confronted Sam with a huge knife in his hand, while his face was full of triumph.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### IN THE BARN.

When Ziah and his companions saw the boys in gray advancing toward the barn, they naturally felt a good deal of mental agitation.

There were already enough men in the building to suit their taste, and the introduction of more looked like crowding the lodgers.

Throughout's suggestion that they conceal themselves in the haymow met with hearty approbation, and there was a sudden scattering as the bluecoats went up and into the hay.

Dignity was not to be considered then, and they burrowed down with more baste than system.

There was still a slight commotion along the road, when the Confederates entered, but the command party had disappeared from view and left no trace.

At the head of the grays was a man who filled the office of corporal—more than that, he overflowed the office and ran down both sides. In his opinion Corporal Briggs was one of the heroes of the war, and his ambition was so towering that, having taken the first step, he already had designs on the office held by one Jubal Early, general in the Confederate service, etc.

The corporal placed one arm akimbo, and while the other hand performed a circle in the air, he surveyed the interior of the barn.

"A goodly stock of animal food," quoth he. "Hay and grain enough here to supply our equines for an indefinite period. I thought us much before I entered. We are lucky to be ahead of the enemy. Here, men, go to the mow and throw down hay enough to feed our whole command. The colonel will return when he has chopped up those

## CHAPTER XVI.

### WHICH TREATS OF BOTTLED WINE.

Let us now return to Captain Carrington.

When he and Ziah went in search of a place by which to enter the house, he was, at the start, more successful than the scout.

He found a window which was unfastened, and it was the work of only a minute to shove up the lower part, brush aside the curtain and enter.

At first he had been silently and quickly down, but he believed the room he had entered to be unoccupied; but while yet hanging from the window, he was seized by strong hands and borne to the floor.

Half a dozen men had been concealed behind various articles of furniture, and they had timed their attack so well that he was given opportunity for neither resistance nor alarm.

One of their number secured the window, while the others bound and gagged their prisoner.

Sam had struggled desperately, but with such odds against him it was all in vain.

His captors did not delay long. They knew just what the situation outside was, and they at once retreated to a small room back of the one he had so unluckily entered.

In this place he was deposited in a chair, and the men wheeled a heavy, old-fashioned "secretary" up against the door, thus completely concealing its existence from any in ruder form.

This explains why Ziah and his companions found no trace of Cavalry Sam. None of them knew aught of the interior of the house; and, in the limited time given them, they did not suspect that one room had escaped their notice.

Carrington looked at his captors closely while they were securing the door, and had no trouble in classifying them.

They were of the same grade as Jake Shelley's gaug, and wolves could not be less merciless.

One of them came over to the prisoner when the work was done, and regarded him with a scowl.

"Waist, mister, how do you like it?" he

said.

"Your question is superfluous; it's not at

runaways, and I must have all in order for him."

The men obeyed promptly. All set about the work except the corporal, himself, and as they labored, he paced the floor with a slow and massive gait.

Three pitchforks had been found and worked by as many men, while the others used their hands, and the upper layer of the hay began to move rapidly from its bed to the floor below.

All this was of intense interest to the concealed boys in the house.

Every hour of hay removed decreased the amount above them, and at that rate it looked as though they would soon be uncovered and taken in by the impromptu farmers.

If the Confederates had looked closely, they might have seen small tremblings of the hay not made by them, for as they tossed down the hay the luckless Unionists burrowed deeper and tried to get away from the shadow of the pitchforks, which had already wounded one or two of them.

Ziah had a more advantageous position than the others.

He was near the edge of the mow, with a clear space at one side, where he could quickly slide to the lower floor when he saw fit, and as the work went on he began to gain an idea.

It did not seem possible that the Unionists could escape discovery. It was liable to come at any minute, and when it did, it meant ruin to the little handful; so the scout began to consider a relief measure.

His plan was a desperate one, but he resolved to act upon it.

A little wriggling took him clear of the hay, and he dropped lightly down into a dark space, and so gained the level of the populous corporal.

This was just what he wanted, for he had designs on that same officer, and, creeping forward near the open floor, he saw him standing in an attitude of deep thought. His gaze was fixed absently on the light pile of hay before him, and it is probable some weighty agricultural problem was surging through his mind.

His reflections were interrupted by a touch on his shoulder, and he looked around to see a man who was a stranger to him; a man in civilian's garments, and rather rough-looking, withal, while in the present case his appearance rose to the level of the horrible.

In his hand was a cocked revolver, and its muzzle covered the eyes of the corporal, full and steady.

"Be still!" said this unwelcome apparition. "Utter one word and you are a dead man!"

"Ziah—for it was he who held the revolver—meant every word that he said, and the corporal knew it, too.

"Why—why—why—" he stammered, considerably alarmed; but the scoundrel interrupted.

"Not a word, mister. I mean business, an' here's the whole case in a few words. I'm interested in this barn, an' I won't have the hay tumbled down that-a-way!"

"But it's for the Confederate army," declared the corporal.

"Confederate thunder! You keep still till I give you leave to speak. As I was saying, this must be stopped. I can hear an you know it. You've got to be sold. Once tech o' your finger plans lead to your home-sure. Don't tempt me, for I am wicked when I'm mad. Now, hear me; I want you to sing out ter them chaps above an' tell them ter stop work an' descend. When they come down, tell them to return ter the others an' leave you alone in the barn. Will ye do it?"

"Yes," said the corporal, with assumed sullenness, but with a gleam in his eyes.

"Hold hard, old man. You mean mischief. It won't work. When they come down I shall be hiding in yonder passage an' my revolver will cover your brain. Ef you set their suspicions at work by word, look, or gesture, I'll shoot you dead. Understand?"

The corporal comprehended only too well, and the situation filled him with fury. He demurred a little, but Ziah sternly cut him short. Work was going on above and the Unionists might be discovered at any time. Matters must be pressed.

Thoroughly cowed, the corporal agreed to faithfully carry out his part of the programme. Ziah retired to the passage, and the soldiers were haled as directed. The corporal ordered them down and they came low.

Perspiring freely, their leader glanced toward the passage and dimly saw a revolver covering his head. Its meaning could

not be misconstrued, and then he told the men to join their comrades by the house while he remained in the barn. They went, laughing, saying that the sly corporal probably wished to take a nap, and that unhappy officer was left alone with his enemy.

Ziah came out of the passage, chuckling, gaily.

"You did wal, old man, you surtly did. This gave you an advantage, and a good one to have you knowin' at his breast."

Then, from the back of his neck, he drew a concealed knife and held it before his eyes.

"Lie still!" he sternly said. "Your life is balanced against your silence. One word of alarm seals your fate!"

There was no mistaking the keen inflection of his voice.

The bushwhacker knew he meant what he said, and he did, but in his heart was a fierce rage. He only required a chance to avenge his wrongs.

At that moment Sam heard voices in the outer room, and then some one's name was pronounced.

He understood the situation; some of the soldiers had entered the house and were trying to awaken the Confederate soldiers.

"What's the doctor?" he heard asked, distinctly.

"In the next room, I reckon," was the reply.

"Go in and see. I don't understand why the cap'n sleeps so sound."

Sam Carrington was stirred into instant activity.

A soldier was about to enter the room he was occupying, and such an intrusion would result in trouble.

Acting on the first impulse, he dragged his prisoner under the bed, and, giving no heed to the surgeon, placed his knife at Barnes' throat.

"One word and you die!" he hissed.

The door then opened, and a Confederate soldier entered.

He paused and glanced curiously around.

"No sign of him here," he said.

"No, he must be there. Ain't he in bed?"

"No."

"That's queer."

"He may be in some other room."

Another soldier strode in after the first.

"Mebbe he's caught the dumps himself, an' gone ter sleep under the bed," he said, as he moved forward.

Carrying Sam shut his teeth tightly.

Discovering, nevertheless, but he was not inclined to yield tamely.

He had a knife in one hand and a revolver in the other, and he could make matters sultry for the enemy, to say the least.

If it were not for Barnes—

Even as the thought entered his mind, the bushwhacker made a desperate effort to free himself, but he only served to show Sam's mettle.

The revolver swept through the air, the bullet struck the man full in the temple, and, with a groan, he fell back senseless.

The soldier stopped just behind the curtain which hung around the bed, and then sprung back.

"Hal! did you hear that?" he demanded.

"I thought I heard a groan."

"So you did, an' it come from under the bed. Thought I heard a thrashin', about sick."

"Mebbe the doctor's under thar, an' sick."

"That's the idee! I didn't think on it before."

Once more he advanced, but at that moment a new voice sounded keen and sharp.

"Halt, there! I've got you covered, and if you move, yell or try to run, out go your legs!"

The two soldiers were at the side of the bed, and, looking toward the foot, they saw a human head rising to view, while a pair of glittering revolvers covered them, a muzzle to each man.

"Stand where you are, and don't try to draw a weapon," ordered Cavalry Sam, standing in the doorway, his hand on one of your part seals your fate."

Even as he spoke, the gallant captain was wondering what he was to do next. He was, to all appearances, without a man at his back, while, besides the fellows under the bed, who were liable to arouse at any moment, he had two very lively foes in front of him and two more outside the building.

It looked as though he was saddling a hard horse to ride, but he had no choice but to go with the current.

"Who the deuce are you?" demanded one of the soldiers.

"Your master," was the terse reply.

utter a word; Barnes could not, because of the pressure on his neck.

Once, in their rapid twistings, they rolled partially under the bed and against the surgeon; but he was not to be awakened easily, and slumbered on peacefully.

Aun, Sam put forth all his power and crammed the bushwhacker into a corner. This gave him an advantage, and a moment more he was knowing at his breast.

Then, from the back of his neck, he drew a concealed knife and held it before his eyes.

"Lie still!" he sternly said. "Your life is balanced against your silence. One word of alarm seals your fate!"

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"Who the deuce are you?" demanded one of the soldiers.

"Your master," was the terse reply.

"By the friends! you are a Northerner."

"Call me what you will, I am boss here at present. You see these revolvers looking at you, do you? Don't try to draw in return, nor to shout for aid. If you do, a lump of lead will settle it."

The soldiers were furious. Brave as men avenging wrong, they might have engaged this bold stranger in battle, but no sensible man cares to face a flying bullet.

"Just back of you!" continued Sam, coolly, "you will see a small rope. Take that and bind your companion."

"I won't do it," flashed the Confederate.

"Your life depends on it. Look at the revolver."

The man did look, and the sight filled him with fury. It was of far better material than the rusty cutlery, and this discomfiture had a sting for him which a baster man would not have felt. Still, there was nothing for him to do except to obey; so, stifling a groan, he turned and picked up the rope.

Sam watched keenly. He knew both the soldiers were brave, quick-witted fellows, true Virginians, and they must be well-guarded or they would yet work him mischief.

The man who was to be bound made no complaint, but stood still while the negro went about the work. Twice Carrington had to hasten him, and only for its repeated cautions the tying would have been poorly done, but his persuasive aid carried the work through, and one of the couple was nothing for him to do except to obey; so, stifling a groan, he turned and picked up the rope.

"Now, come here," the victor said, to the other. "Put your hands above your head."

"Both hands were obeyed.

"Now I will bind you as you have bound your friend."

So saying, he laid down his weapon, advanced and took the cord. He did not at once use it. However, it was the moment for which a man had awaited, and with a tremendous sound he leaped upon his enemy.

The Unionist had expected as much, and was ready for it. He met the attack with his strong arms and the two grappled like gladiators. Sam had not forgotten his wrestling tricks, and they quickly went down with the Confederate at the bottom, but he proved full of pluck and skill and was not to be kept there.

A desperate struggle began, but it bade fair to soon be finished. Sam had committed a great oversight in leaving the legs of the first soldier unbound, for, as soon as the others grappled, he dashed into the outer room to give the alarm to the soldiers outside.

Even as he went, however, a new and startling sound broke upon his hearing. He hesitated, wavered, and then went to the window. Once more the scene on the lawn had changed; and the Confederate saw his comrades galloping in disorder, while, mixed in with them in a way far from pleasant, were numerous riders in Union blue.

One glance was enough to show the observer that the day was going against the boys in gray. They had been surprised, and, though not perceptibly outnumbered, were getting severely flogged. The sabers of the now-comes were being used with terrible effect.

The sight excited the man, to such a pitch that he managed to burst his bonds, after which he sprang from the window and caught a loose horse, so intent on caring for himself that he utterly forgot his friend who was riding Cavalry Sam.

It was somewhat later that the latter, having worsted his opponent after a long struggle, recovered his revolver, and menaced him while he endeavored to recover his own breath.

"What next?" he sputtered, "I thought, while we were rolling about, that I heard the sound of fighting outside, but all's quiet now, and I reckon I was mistaken."

Even as he spoke, the door was suddenly pushed open, and a stout negro entered. Sam had started to raise his revolver, but as he plainly saw the face of the intruder he paused in irresolution.

The man looked strangely familiar.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### A CAVALRY FIGHT.

The negro who had entered the room was of medium size, but stoutly built, and his face was sharp and shrewd beyond the average. His eyes took a roving glance, and then his white teeth came to the front through the agency of a broad smile.

"Halloo! Massa Sam; how you do?" he asked.

"Cleon, by thunder!" exclaimed Carrington.

"Used to be to Cleon, massa, but now my name is Edmund Smith. I'm a free American darky, all the way from Shenandoah to Pennsylvania."

"And I'm glad of it. Shake, old boy."

And, forgetful of the unbound prisoner, the two shook hands warmly. They had met under peculiar circumstances after many years, but neither had forgotten the other. Edmund had always remembered the "Massa Sam," who had been so kind to him when he was only a boy; and the Union captain felt warmly toward one who had warned him in time of danger, and afterward had served in his flight through the swamp.

Cordial, indeed, was their greeting, but Sam soon remembered the man under his knee.

"Where did you come from, Edmund? Do you see I've got a prisoner? Just bring over that string and let me tie him, will you?"

The negro obeyed, and the Confederate was soon beyond power of mischief.

"Your soldiers are outside, Massa Sam," Edmund then said.

"Any time? Well, I've lost the run of affairs about here of late, but it strikes me there has been some disturbance outside as well as in. What has been the trouble?"

Edmund suggested that the captain go out and show himself to his men, without further delay, and his appearance at the door was hailed with cheers. The graycoats had been scattered, and those who had escaped to the capture were speeding away as fast as their horses could carry them.

Ziah and his companions had made their appearance from the barn, so there was a general reunion in front of the house.

We already know what adventures have befallen Sam and Ziah since they first came to the house; those of the main body of cavalrymen may be briefly given.

When the boys in gray came down on the place, two hundred strong, there were less than twenty Unionists to oppose them, so the latter were quickly put to rout, and their leader and half a dozen men behind.

They would very likely have fared badly in that fight had they not chanced upon Edmund; but he was in the saddle on some errand for his master, and he led the fugitives around in such a way that they evaded the pursuers, doubled on their track, and came back to the Eagar house.

"Where are the confederates now?" Sam abruptly asked.

"Piled up Dresser's woods," said Edmund, with one of his old-time grins. "I suppose they think sure we are in dar' an' they have divided into two parties an' surrounded de whole wood."

"Divided, say you?"

"Yes, suh."

"Then, by my life, we'll up and at 'em again. There can't be more than seventy-five men in each party, and if the work is well done we can whip 'em, one half before the other's supper is finished."

Ziah uttered a suppressed cheer. He did not know enough about history to understand that Carrington was planning to move after the style of the first Napoleon, but he did recognize the feasibility of the idea.

Preparations for departure were at once made. The barn was fired in a score of places, and the fire-lead took quick hold. Evidently, there would soon be nothing left but the walls to return to.

As the light could not be discerned with prisoners in their dash, all the Confederates were for the time left in the house. Those who had partaken of the wine could not be awakened, and the Union surgeon stated that they were drugged, but not poisoned.

In fact, the owner of the house, before going to join Early's army, had poured a strong sleeping drug into each bottle, excepting one which he left for the invaders who would find and drink it later. Whether it was humanity, or the possibility that his own friends would find and fall victims to it, that prevented him from putting in poison, is uncertain.

Carrington got his men in motion as soon as possible. If he succeeded in doing damage to the Confederates, it must be by prompt action, and, moreover, night was his best ally.

They started from the clearing, they looked back, and saw the barns blazing in a fierce flame; then their faces were turned to the front, and they went on at a gallop.

Cavalry Sam was full of confidence. De-

spite certain misadventures of the day, he had been generally successful, and, by means of pluck, quick wit, and good luck, he had crawled from more than one tight place.

He did not believe his successes had come to an end.

He rode at the head of his gallant band, with Ziah and Edmund beside him.

The reunion of the trio, after so many days, was calculated to inspire all with a desire to talk, but the leader did not forget that he was a soldier, and few unnecessary words were said.

Two miles were soon passed, for their pace was a rapid one, and then they neared Dresser's wood.

Signs of the Confederates might be seen at any moment, and as Sam did not care to engage them if they had consolidated, he halfted his bluecoats in a thin wood, and began to give directions to Ziah regarding a scout.

At the moment a murmur ran along the Union line.

It reached the captain, and sent him to the edge of the trees.

Just beyond them, coming across the open field which lay ahead, about three score riders in gray were advancing at a walk.

It was one half of the divided force.

"By Jupiter!" cried Cavalry Sam, "they are walking right into our jaws!"

"Let's go out an' 'em 'em," suggested Edmund.

"Wait," said the captain, coolly. "Don't you see they are coming to us?"

He paused and reflected a moment, and then gave a few hasty orders.

The bluecoats took positions assigned them, and all waited grimly.

The Confederates came on slowly, without a suspicion of danger. They crowded the open field and entered the second wood.

Then, when they were fairly in the ambush, the Unionists arose on all sides. Methuselah was used in the attack, and there was scarcely a man but found himself personally bested.

In the wood it was already dark, and this served to bother the rebels; but they were not long in comprehending the situation, and then they began to fight as brave men will.

It was really a saber contest, and the clash of steel filled the air with strange echoes. Swords were gleaming red-hot, and gallant fighting done; but the Confederates were taken at a disadvantage, and they fought against hope.

Many surrendered when hard pressed, for the enemy seemed more numerous than they really were, and those left to fight grew rapidly fewer in numbers.

At the end of ten minutes, it was over. The remaining men threw down their arms, and the battle was won.

Four prisoners had been taken, and several dead men were on the ground.

Captain Carrington was uncertain what to do next.

It seemed his best course to hasten to camp with his prisoners; but the desire to attack the second party was so strong that he sent Ziah out to ascertain their position.

The scout went, but he returned much sooner than had been expected. He came to say that the rebels were advancing directly toward them, and not more than a mile distant at that moment.

Carrington was wide awake in a moment. He left ten men to guard the prisoners, and with only thirty-five advanced to meet the new force.

Ziah led the way, and took the devoted handful to an advantageous position at the edge of a wood.

On the north lay an open field, and across this he believed the Confederates would come.

He had not miscalculated. Very few minutes had passed when they emerged from cover and then, breaking into a trot, began crossing the field.

Darkness had fully fallen, but the Unionists could see plainly enough to tell that the rebels were twice their own number. Still they did not hesitate.

In such affairs, surprise counts as half of the battle.

At the proper moment, they, too, broke cover, and with their horses going at a gallop, swept down on the larger force.

They were soon seen, and the Confederates halted in confusion.

Of all things they had least expected an attack, and the bold dash of the handful made it seem as though they were strong in numbers.

There was no time to get the Confederates into order and, when they were struck, it was as a shapeless mass. Orders were ini-

ly given, but the first confusion could not be done away with. From the first, they fought a losing fight.

Still, Virginians fight well when they fight all, and many of them presented a bold front.

Once more the clash of steel sounded sharply on the hills, and the field was covered with horsemen who spurred here and there, as the battle surged from side to side.

But, while the boys in gray fought against hope, Carrington's men were firm and orderly.

Every blow seemed to take effect; and, despite their inferiority of numbers, they began to drive the struggle further north.

Seeing just what was afoot, Sam gathered a dozen men around him and then made a dash into the center of the Confederates. The plan succeeded, and they broke under the charge and fled in confusion.

Their leader shouted in vain for them to stand firm; they had faced the music long enough; and, in a confused body, they wheeled and fled back to the woods from which they came.

The victory followed for half a mile, but Sam was wise enough to be satisfied with a partial success, and he did not try to capture them.

Then, wheeling, he hurried his men back to where he had left the prisoners under guard; and, making a detour to secure those left at Eager's house, was soon on his way back to the valley.

And, three hours after dark, he reported to his superior officer, and exhibited three-score prisoners to prove the truth of his story.

The day's work gained fresh honors for him and dealt the enemy another blow, but it was only one of a series of sharp cavalry encounters which were taking place in the valley.

Sam's men were roving at their will just then, but the Confederates were at all times ready to show their teeth.

## CHAPTER XX.

### AFTER THREE YEARS.

Several days passed without the occurrence of anything of particular interest between the hostile armies.

Early had once attempted to surprise Sheridan, when the forces of the latter lay near Fish Creek, and had made a disastrous undertaking for the Confederates, and matters assumed a quiet aspect.

The Unionists had roved freely through the valley until satisfied with their work, and they thought Early so much weakened by repeated losses as to be harmless.

Such being the case, Captain Carrington acted on an idea he had long had in his mind.

He wished to look once more upon the scenes of his boyhood. True, not a building was standing on his own land, but the hills and valleys were still there.

Again, he wished to visit the Warburtons. Ziah had once been there, and received a cordial welcome from Vida, Augusta not being at home.

The hand of war had spared their estate from destruction. The Confederates knew Augusta to be in warm sympathy with their cause; and Vida was known to be equally devoted to the other side.

Had they been men, this state of affairs would not have saved them; but, even in war, a true man feels a chivalrous regard for the fair sex.

So, in the old home, the sisters lived with no pride, but with a certain downy peace which had clung to their fortunes through all. At times, lawless men of both armies had made rather free about the place, but they could conscientiously offer little complaint.

Cavalry Sam was anxious to see them after the long years of separation. He was not slow to look for them; and for the daughter of Vida he could never feel less than manly respect and regard.

Perhaps he would not be welcomed if he went, but it was worth testing.

So he gained the necessary leave of absence, and rode away one morning accompanied by Ziah. First of all, they visited the Carrington plantation.

It was gloomy home-coming for the young master. Not even a cabin stood on the broad estate.

The ruins of the old mansion lay as Jake Shelley's rude hand had left them. Desolation was everywhere, and it was not strange that Samuel Carrington's face grew sad.

His mind went back to the old days when he was a boy. Then all was peace and prosperity.

The fields bore abundant crops and the well-treated negroes sang at their work as gray-haired Roger Carrington sat on the piazza and watched them in languid comfort. Well loved had he been by all, this aged sire of Cavalry Sam.

"While he sat thus, probably the boy was in the woods near Ziah's, still hunting some game, or listening to a thrilling story as they lay under the whispering trees.

What a change the war had wrought!

How long the captain reflected he never knew, for Ziah, after keeping silence for awhile, deemed it best to arouse him from his gloomy thoughts. Sam started, showed more animation, and then they moved on toward Warburton's.

Their road was the same Sam had traveled the day when Augusta told him of the firing on Fort Sumter, but that, too, had changed. An army had passed along, and it had been widened to allow the passage of their guns—it scarcely seemed like the same place.

As they broke through the last wood upon the Warburton estate, a far different view was given them.

They had touched the place with a gentle hand. The buildings were undisturbed. Even the fields, though less cared for, were familiar in every way.

They rode at once to the front of the mansion. No one was visible, but Sam's knock soon brought a stout negress to the door. She started, recognizing him at once, and looked abashed, but he put out his hand with a smile.

"How do you do, Aunt Molly," he said. "Bless the Lord, Massa Sam! am it you, for sure? Dis nigger nebbur ayan expected to see you."

"Strange things happen, auntie, and I have come back to you after many years."

"I'se glad to see you, bless the Lord, I is; but am I a yeller a puttin' your head in dision's hands?"

"How so?"

"Jake Shelley's gang was here only last night."

"They had better keep away," said Sam, frowning. "Some day I'll get after that wretch and make him howl. Are the ladies in, auntie?"

"'Bout ob dem, sah."

"Will you ask them if they want to see Sam? Come in, and tell me more?"

"I will, to sure."

Aunt Molly retired, but soon reappeared to say that the ladies "would be pleased to see Captain Samuel Carrington."

"Which of them bade you utter that long name?" he asked.

"Miss Augusta, sah."

"Ab!"

Sam smiled slightly, and then glanced at Ziah.

"I'll keep Aunt Molly company in the kitchen," said the scout. "T'won't be the first time I've been that."

"Bress you, Massa Ziah, no," added the negro.

Cavalry Sam entered. Declining Aunt Molly's guidance, Cavalry Sam went straight to the kitchen, where he had so often been in the past. He stopped. A voice bade him enter, and he passed within.

The Misses Warburton were there. They were both standing, and one of them came forward impetuously and grasped his hand. It was Vida; but scarcely the Vida of the old epoch. Three years had developed the pretty, graceful girl into a magnificent woman—so royally beautiful that the visitor was amazed—but in her face and eyes were all of the old lights. She was the same as ever at heart.

"Oh, Sam! I am so glad to see you!" she declared, as she caught his hand. "It brings back the old days so!"

"And I," added a calm voice, "am also glad to see Captain Carrington."

It was Augusta who spoke, and she came forward with graceful dignity and held out her hand, as though there was no political gulf between them.

She had changed but little. He saw the same calm, beautiful and queasily girl who had told him of the news from Sumter.

He held both their hands, but looked at Augusta.

"I am not Captain Carrington; I am Sam," he said, and across his bronzed face.

"The war journals say you are a brave and a brave soldier. It reminds me of the old days when you were 'Mad Sam' to hear them tell of your dashing ways." No wonder the North is proud of you, and calls you 'Cavalry Sam,' as you lead your legions on such devastating raids."

There was a tinge of sarcasm and bitterness

in her voice, which took off any flavor of flattery which might be imagined, and Vida hastened to say:

"For shame, Augusta; do no begin to quarrel so soon."

"I am sure there will be no quarreling," said the soldier, "for I have come only as 'Sam'."

Having thus prefaced their interview, they seated themselves, and an animated conversation began.

Augusta said no bitter words; and under the spell of the moment all three forgot that the years had rolled on and left their youthful days forever in the rear.

The gallant captain had not seen a happy moment for years. He had met handsome women, young and fair, but after all none were equal to those of the Old Dominion. He was a loyal man in his devotion to his state, women, whatever Augusta might think of his political heresies.

Vida surprised him most of all. She had seemed like a child when he went away three years before; but time had made her a woman gloriously beautiful, with a kindly look in her dusky eyes. He thought of the letter of warning he had once sent him, and wondered if she remembered it as well; but the memory of her warm greeting was a sufficient proof that she had not grown cold toward him.

Conversation drifted to national affairs.

"The war will soon end," said Augusta, sadly.

"And then I shall return to the old plantation," the captain answered, with a sigh.

"Can you again assume the ways of a Virginian?"

"I have never abandoned them. I am all Virginian at heart, and there is no place like home."

"I fear we shall never settle back into the old, pleasant life. It is too much to expect that Vida and I will be here with you on our right and Alfred Penrock on the left, as in days of yore."

"Still, I trust that it may be so. Dear old Alfred, how I would like a long chat with him."

"He makes a gallant soldier."

"He is a Penrock," answered Sam, proudly, "and if he had not so long been a staff officer he would be even more than a colonel today."

"You might have been as much, to-day, if you had gone with the South, Sam."

"Perhaps I might have been a clod," he answered, with a light laugh. "The Southers shattered a limb for me at Malvern Hills; they might have done worse had I given them a chance."

"Ab! you are an irreclaimable traitor," said Augusta, with a lightness which surprised Sam.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### AN UNPLEASANT INTERRUPTION.

Captain Carrington was surprised and delighted at the friendly ways of the sisters, especially as he had known Augusta to be so firm a sympathizer with the South. He remembered the rebukes she had heaped upon him when first he announced his intention of fighting for the North. Now, however, in a hostile army laying waste to the fair valley of the Shenandoah, it seemed as though she ought to be more bitter than usual.

Had he had time for reflection, he might perhaps have remembered the advice given to him by his aged father:

"Don't try to understand a sex that don't understand themselves."

Sam had been put in a cynical mood. Before the smiles of the ladies he was happy. Bright eyes had always possessed a strong attraction for him, and theirs were unsurpassed. He was enjoying a feast of the head and heart.

Time glided rapidly away. Noon came and passed, and Sam once more sat at the table with the Misses Warburton as of yore. He had been invited to have a repast, but he had already given himself to Aunt Molly's hoe-cakes. He thanked the ladies, and said a few rather graceful things, and then subsided into his corner in the kitchen.

Sam and the sisters went over the events of their lives during the last three years more fully.

Both Augusta and Vida had tried the life of a widow, but the poor old woman had soon tired of it, and when Vida went to Washington to do what she could for the Union, some thick-headed official had suspected her good faith, because she was from the South, and she had been sent back to the Confederate lines. It was her first and last attempt.

There were no long pauses in the conversation; they had enough to talk about to last for a long time, and Sam was highly gratified at the state of affairs. Very soon, another visit was made, and the deceiver, the war would be brought to an end, and then he hoped to rebuild on the old estate, and resume his friendly association with such of his old friends as had survived the struggle.

As clouds form on a sunny sky, so this pleasant visit was interrupted.

Aunt Molly, from the moment that she saw Sam, was filled with a fear that harm would befall him. With her, the distinctions between Unionist and Confederate were overbalanced by other things, and her heart was warm toward the big soldier, who, as a boy, had eaten hoe-cake in her kitchen, and praised her culinary work.

So, while the others visited, she watched for breakers ahead, and breakers appeared all too soon.

From out a wood to the rear of the house came a score of men; she was not long in recognizing them. They were ragged, ill-favored fellows, dressed in ordinary clothing, but all were armed, and their manner was lawless and swaggering.

Ziah had gone in to talk with Sam and the ladies, and all were startled when Aunt Molly abruptly invaded the room.

"Oh! de good Lord!" she gasped, breathlessly, "you must done get out o' du right away, Massa Sam. De Philistines are comin', an' you will be killed, fo' sure!"

Vida, who had been turned pale, but the captain, without stirring, tersely asked:

"Who is comin'?"

"It am Jake Shelley an' his gang. Oh! de good Lord, Massa Sam, dey will kill you," "I reckon not," said he, coolly. "Where are they? I want a look at them."

"Dey are comin' data-way. Oh! mercy on us, Massa Sam!"

He waited to hear no more, but strode to where he could view the eastern field. There she had said, a score of rough-looking fellows, armed to the teeth, had come to the house with Jake Shelley striding at their head.

"Bushwhackers!" said Ziah, calmly.

"You must hide," said Augusta, her fair face still pale. "We have not a fighting man on the place, and you cannot resist them alone. We will conceal you in the attic and get them away as soon as possible. They will not remain long."

"Don't fear for us," said Carrington, calmly. "We may do what we suspect we are here, and you have more to fear than we. Rather than have trouble, we will keep out of it, though nothing would please me more than to get a chance at Jake Shelley. I have not forgotten how he once hunted me with bloodhounds."

"Pay the debt some other time, and when the odds are in your favor," said Vida, quickly. "For now, go to the attic, and do not leave it under any consideration. These bushwhacker gangs often come here, but we know how to manage them. We have letters of protection from numerous Southern leaders, among them General Early, and they will not dare molest us. Come with me, both of you, and I will show you that we are prepared for emergencies."

"Just as you say," answered Sam, smiling. "We will hide; but if those fellows get unruled you may expect us to sally forth in our might to annihilate them."

He was talking for effect, for, really, he had grave fears in the case. Like Shelley was low and brutal enough to commit any lawless deed, regardless of Jubal Early, Jefferson Davis or the whole Southern Confederacy; and though it was possible no real harm would come of his visit, it was just as probable that it would result in a fight which would go hard for him and all his friends.

Vida quickly led the way to the attic. Apparently, the long space was all in one unbroken room, but Sam, who had traversed many a day in his boyhood, noticed that it seemed a trifle shorter than of old.

The girl led the way to the northern end. To all appearances, there was only a blank wall there, composed of lathing and mortar, but she touched a hidden spring and a portion of the wall the size of a door receded, revealing a small room inside.

"Each room," said quickly, "You will find accommodations there, and means of securing the door. Now, I implore you to remain quiet until you hear me ring a bell at this entrance. That, and that alone, will be the signal that all is safe. Until then, you must stay inside and make no sound. Do you promise?"

"You can depend on us; only, if there is

actual trouble, you must let us know. Two determined men can do a good deal against such a crowd as Shelley's gang. There, go, for Augusta will want you."

She ended her hand, impulsively, it being a movement within his own, and then she went out. Looking back, when at the top of the stairs, she saw the secret door closed and began to breath easier.

"You are clever, Cavalry. Sam," said the scout. "Yon got her away without actually bindin' yourself with a promise."

"Do you suppose I will stay in here like a sneak and allow Shelley to work his vicious plans—if vicious they are? No, I shall keep a close watch, and if he gets ugly we will strike, of course. I had to outwardly yield to the ladies, but it left them unnecessary worry, but we will keep ourselves well informed as to what is going on."

"Ef only your slashers was hyer now, what a harvest they could reap."

"We will have Jake Shelley some day."

They locked the secret room carefully. It was a cunning affair, and only one acquaintance with the attic would suspect its existence; but, though the room was scarcely square, the wall was thick and bullet-proof and the door was hung and provided with stout bars.

This refuge had been planned by the sisters and made under their directions by their slaves, and more than once it had done good service in the past.

Augusta, after being left alone, seemed to lose all composure. She sank into a chair and pressed her hands over her heart, and her fair face was almost colorless.

"Merciful Heaven!" she said, "what will happen to us now? Jacob Shelley has sworn to play the torch to our house, and if Sam interferes he will be murdered. It may even be that Shelley knows of his presence and is coming because of that. Oh! what can we do? He must be saved, for—I love him!"

Her head dropped on her hand, and she was mute and motionless, her pride and strength all gone.

But enough she could be for herself, but she feared for Sam.

Despite the national grief between them, she had carried his image in her heart through all the dreary years of war.

Half an hour before, sitting near, and listening to his manly voice, she had hoped the war would soon end, she scarcely cared how if only it brought Sam Carrington back to the Shenandoah Valley.

The entrance of Vida aroused her from reflection, and she turned a pallid face to her young friend.

"Mercy!" said the latter, whose face had suddenly grown full of color, "how pale you are! You must rally, Augusta. The bushwhackers are at our door, and we cannot play the timid girl. Only cunning work can save us from those vilenruffians."

"I shall be stronger in a moment," said Augusta, striving to regain her composure.

"I would give much for a sight of Colonel Peacock now, or for any force of regular Confederate soldiers," said Vida, mutinously. "Can't we send for aid?" was the quick inquiry.

"I was thinking of that, but it is too late. Besides, I fear aid could not be spared. Come let us go and meet Jacob Shelley."

## CHAPTER XXII. A SURPRISE FOR JACOB.

Jake Shelley and his men had reached the house, and were taking a survey of the premises.

Of late they had received some wholesome lessons from the invading armies, and when they moved it was with a degree of caution. The band had once numbered six-score, but the eighteen men who were now at the Warburton house comprised all that was left of the original party.

More despicable wretches did not exist in Virginia, and Shelley had twice been warned by General Early that trouble would come to him unless he changed his mode of warfare.

In the carrying out of his plans for plunder he had a bad habit of forgetting whether his victims were loyal or disloyal, and the ex-prison birds who followed his lead cared nothing so long as they obtained booty.

If peace had been in the Old Dominion, most of them would be in jail; they must remain there while the sun shone.

Shelley, at the door, held a brief parley with Aunt Molly, and then Vida came forward with an inquiring look on her face. She was perfectly calm outwardly, and the vicious eyes of the bushwhacker brightened

with admiration at sight of her handsome face.

"Evenin', marm, evenin'," he said, pulling off his battered hat and sweeping one foot back with what he meant for a graceful greeting. "Hope I see you wal, marm."

"Quite well, Mr. Shelley," was the steady reply. "I see you are in the field again."

"Yees, we are that; in fact, we are never still but a'ways. The invaders are on oursele, an' it behoves me as a leader o' band o' Virginians to be up an' doin'."

"If you can catch them, we will give a little food to you and your men."

"Oh, we ain't pressed fur time jest now. In fact, we intended to stop. Much obligeed for the invitation, though. Hyer, you warriors, squat down on the piazza while I go in an' take a nap. I feel like easin' up a bit on my yoke."

Although this was something not included in the invitation, Vida noted the inevitability with what grace she could, and stepped aside for Shelley to enter.

He waited for no ceremony, but strode straight to where Augusta was trying to regain her courage.

She heard his heavy footsteps, started, and grew pale again; but the very nearness of the danger served her suddenly, and she turned a calm face when he entered. He at once made himself at home. His heavy form went down on the costly sofa, and his dilapidated boots came to the same level.

There was a malicious pleasure in all he did. Once, he had been an overseer on the plantation, but he had never been allowed in the mansion; while, at a later day, he had been discharged and warned to keep away.

Now, he had come as a conqueror, he was in the places once held as too sacred for him to enter, and with his brute form extended on the sofa he was enjoying the triumph of a low and vulgar mind.

"Trot out some wine, will you, gals?" he familiarly and coarsely said.

"There is not a particle of any kind of stimulant in the house," Vida calmly said. "We can offer nothing except food."

"No liquor? Thunder! What if some one should come along and demand it?"

"In that case, we should show them our letters of protection from Generals Early and Lee, and tell them to go their way," was the ready reply.

"Early he blowed. He don't count fur early at the present time. His arms have to smash an' he has all he can do to protect himself. He ain't much o' a man anyway. If he had been, he would have saved the day at Winchester, an' kept the enemy from 'arin' the Shenandoah all ter pieces."

"You must remember he was strongly outnumbered," said Augusta, who had not forgotten that she and her had done much for her own and Vida's safety.

The opposition only led the ruffian on to fresh extravagances. He abused Generals Early and Lee, Jefferson Davis and the whole body of Southern leaders, and with each unreasoning attack, worked himself into additional fury.

"I don't believe but what you have wine in the house," he said anon. "I'm goin' ter have some. Reckon your memories are gettin' poor, but the battle's soon to be settled. Lead the way to the solarium."

The ladies grew alarmed and began to remonstrate, and then, when he would not listen, showed the letter from General Early, but he flung it contemptuously aside.

"None o' you tricks byer, my pretty one," he rudely said. "No tricks on old travelers. Jubal Early ain't o' any more account to-day than Jacob Shelley, an' I'm jest goin' over your fine house ter see what kin' be found for the good o' the Confederate army."

Augusta and Vida remonstrated in vain. Appeals and warnings were alike unheeded. Shelley had come to the house with a fixed purpose, and he was not to be turned aside. If he did not change his plans, the ladies would be lucky indeed if they did not meet with personal violence before he was through. He treated them because they were women, and above him in the social scale, and he intended to do all in his power to annoy them before he left.

He was even contemplating the application of a fire-brand to the noble old building.

He pushed past the girls and went up toward the cellar. They dared not oppose him further, but, as his heavy steps sounded on the stairs, stood together and asked simultaneously:

"What shall we do?"

It was a question not easily answered, for they seemed utterly helpless. Against Shelley also they might possibly wage a successful war by some cunning trick, but with so many men outside, resistance was out of the question.

Meanwhile, Shelley went on and began prowling about the cellar. He found everything except what he wanted, and it soon began to look as though the cellar, at least, contained no wine.

He was flinging barrels and boxes about in a wild, sort of a way, when he came upon a drygoods case which was bottom up-  
permost. It was not tight enough to hold any kind of liquid, but he whirled it aside out of simple mischief.

What followed rather surprised him though.

The removal of the case did not leave an empty space, however, for as he turned it over, it revealed some sort of a dark object which, just then, looked not unlike a toad under a microscope, and Shelley, poorly aided by a wretched lamp, winked vigorously to decide by a clearer vision whether the thing was really a man, as it looked to be, or—

The master was quickly decided. The dark object sprang up like a flash, and Shelley, with a yell, leaped enough to discover that it was a stout negro who bounded forward with lowered head and a quickness the bushwhacker could not avoid.

Squarely in the stomach the hard head struck him, and he went headlong backward, knocking over a barrel and plunging one elbow into a pailful of water which looked none too clean.

Very little life was left. Jacob's carcass for a time lay still, and he could only lay and groan in a most dismal fashion. Just then, he neither knew nor cared what had hit him; he was wholly wrapped up in the pain which the heavy blow had left behind it.

Not so the man who had felled him. One moment a broad smile widened his fat face; then he set the fallen lamp on a box, and produced a quantity of stout cords from his pocket.

"Hiyah!" he said, "I guess I done won de first round in de prize fight. I'll tie up de pison serpent right away. We uns don't want no sech white trash round hyer."

Surging the action to the word, his nimble fingers quickly applied the cord to Shelley's wrists and ankles. The ruffian struggled somewhat, but his efforts were vague and useless, and in the course of five minutes the negro had him firmly secured.

He then retreated a few paces.

"Golly!" he muttered, "I dunno, but I've spilled de fat in de fire by doin' dis; but ob course, I couldn't le de ole varmint wring my neck as he would be glad ter do. Huh! Jake Shelley, mebbe you won't crack de oseher's whip round my legs agin dis week."

The speaker reflected for a moment and then went up the stairs. The door was closed, but it yielded to his touch. He passed through and confronted Augusta and Vida.

"Cleon!" they exclaimed, together.

"Dat used ter be my name, but I is now Edmund Smith, private vallet to Colonel Lendulon."

The negro, who was indeed our old friend, found himself most warmly greeted, but he scarcely heeded that but looked anxiously around the hall.

"Whar is Massa Sam an' Ziah?" he asked.

"Here!" answered a voice, and the captain came through an open door, closely followed by the scout.

His appearance alarmed the Misses Warburton, but he directed him to return to the attic, and Edmund also crowded forward for a share of attention.

"Wait a bit, Massa Sam; I's got a case ob yeller fever in de cellar an' don't know what to do wid it."

"A case of yellow fever?"

"In oder words, Jake Shelley. He intruded on my personal property, and I had to tie him up for safe keepin'."

Every one except Cavalry Sam uttered an exclamation of dismay.

"How come you in the house?" he asked. "I didn't come to the door and pass an' when I seed de fellers out front, I slipped into de cellar by de back window. Jest den down come dat nosin' Jake Shelley. I didn't want no row wid him, an' I hid under a box, but he tipped it over an' I had ter lay him out ter save my own bacon."

The last words were said apologetically, for he saw that they were not pleased with him, but even then Ziah shook his head gloomily.

"You've got us inter a pretty pickle, you black imp!"

"Nothing can save us now," added Augusta.

"Wait," said Sam, coolly. "We must put our wits at work and save ourselves. Otherwise, as you say, we are in a quicksand. Once let us get away from here, I expect Shelley has met with misfortune and they will tear the house down over our heads."

"Fore de Lord, I didn't intend ter do harm," declared Edmund, in real distress.

"Don't you lament, my colored friend, but save your muscle for a more pressing emergency. Has any one here a plan to offer?"

"Can't we send for help?" said Vida.

"Yes, yes," added Augusta, "send Cleon General Early, or to— to your friends, captain."

"And have them arrive only to find the house burned to the ground. That would be the only result. I have an idea working in my mind; let me perfect it."

Sam stared straight at the wall, and the others were looking in subdued voices. Edmund was shown the direction in which he had plunged them by capturing Shelley, but they could not very well blame him. Still, the situation was serious. The bushwhackers might at any minute knock at the door to inquire for their leader, and then the magazine would explode, as it were.

Cleavington soon arose.

"We have the idea," he said.

"What is it?" Augusta quickly asked.

"One which augments our chances by a hair, as I may say; a resolute so desperate that even I am in doubt."

"Name it, Sam, name it," said Ziah.

"We must get the other bushwhackers into the cellar."

"A good idea, but how can we do it?"

"Simply by informing them that Shelley is here, and that he wants them to enter and help drink the wine he had found there."

Ziah shook his head.

"It won't work."

"Why not?"

"They won't walk inter any sech trap as that."

"Perhaps not, but I think they will. They don't know there is an enemy near, or that Shelley has run agains us, and, mebbe, nobody loves wine better than they. Would it be anything strange for the whole gang to go down when invited to a free drink?"

There was reason in his argument, but it took some time to fully persuade his companions.

This being done, they moved promptly. Edmund was directed to slip out of the house by the rear, regular as he had left it, at the edge of the wood, and ride full speed to the Union camp, and the first shot was taken in the plan when the negro went away as indicated.

He gained the wood undiscovered, and then, there was no doubt but that he would ride as fast as his horse could go.

"Now," said Cavalry Sam, coolly, "you had better send out a good dinner to the outside bushwhackers. It will do more to keep them quiet than anything else in the world."

This idea was also acted upon, and as Aunt Molly had the meal already prepared, the bushwhackers were soon busy in getting outside of it.

Sam remembered the drugged wine at the front door, and would have given them a taste of some stuff, but, unluckily, there was not a drop in the house.

An hour passed, and Edmund was believed to be at the Union camp. Another such interval of grace, and aid would come.

But the bushwhackers were growing uneasy. Night was not far away, and they had tired of their position on the bare piazza. They had been idly talking, but it looked just as though he was monopolizing all the good things of life.

Finally, one of them knocked at the door. Aunt Molly, who was displaying remarkable courage, answered the summons.

The man wanted to know why Shelley tarried so long.

She referred to the sitting-room, and then retorted that the reason was that Shelley would be ready to move in just half an hour.

The bushwhacker growled disconsolately, and went sullenly back to his comrades, and another wait began.

The ladies vainly urged Sam and Ziah to save themselves by flight, which they could easily do, but they were not so craven as that.

They very well knew that when Shelley's misfortune was known, nothing could save the mansion from destruction, and the girls would probably fare no better.

When they were turn urged to flee, they refused to leave their home. They had lefters of protection from prominent Southerners, and they would not be driven away.

Augusta frequently looked at Carrington with admiration on her face. How noble he had grown since those days.

Such a man was her ideal of all that was grand and manly, and more than ever she wished he had taken sides with the South.

Still—well, it was merely a matter of opinion, and she could not feel harshly toward him if he did wear the army blue of the invaders.

The discontent among the bushwhackers began to increase, and Carrington plainly saw that their last resort must be tried. He laid his plans for the grand attempt, but, as every moment counted, delayed as long as possible.

Another half hour ought to bring the boys in blue.

Other events were destined to occur first. Cavalry Sam watched with a keen scrutiny, and when he saw that the iron was hot, he struck.

The discontent of the bushwhackers had grown to a sullen fury, and he knew they would wait no longer, while further excuse would only serve to awaken their suspicion that something was wrong.

Once more Aunt Molly went to the door, and this time she did so in a voice remarkable for its steadiness. She knew that Shelley had just awakened from a brief sleep, that he was sorry it was so late, and that they would depart at once.

First, however, each and every man could have a drink of old wine by stepping down into the cellar.

"Will you come, chillun?" the negroes asked.

Would they? The question was unnecessary.

Their ugly mood vanished at once, and they made a rush inside the house.

"Dar's de doah," continued Aunt Molly, "an' Massa Shelley is already down dar. Go right down an' help yourselves."

Pushing each other in their eagerness, the rough fellows went down—every man of them.

Then the door was firmly secured, and they were in the trap.

Of course they could not long be held, for, though Sam and Ziah had taken the precaution to remove Shelley to the upper part of the house where he could be used as a shield, if need be, the cheat would soon be discovered, and the bushwhackers were sharp enough to dig out.

The place which Edmund had entered the cellar, was only a small opening to admit the light, and even that had been walled up by the Unionists while they waited.

A brief and ominous silence followed the caging of the gang. The little group above was strangely calm.

The men were soldiers and accustomed to danger, but this emergency even Augusta and Vida had rallied and were showing their heritage of courage.

"Thar will be a squall poooty soon," said Ziah, grimly.

"De Unioners ain't in sight," said Aunt Molly, returning from a pilgrimage to the front door.

"It is as though we were standing on a volcano," said Vida with a little shiver.

"Let us hope that, however much the internal elements may froth and foam, they will not succeed in getting out of the crater," said Sam, with a lightness he did not feel.

"I believeth they went in after the cray-  
thor," added Ziah, willing to help in a good cause.

"That's a bad pun; one we would never comprehend if we didn't know what they did go after. Don't try again, Ziah."

"Hark!" said Augusta.

A murmur of voices came from below,

### CHAPTER XXIII.

#### CAGED TIGERS.

Edmund made his announcement nonchalantly, but it fell on his hearers with startling force. They saw further than he, and it was more than that it was possible for them to see. Shelley's part would be investigated by his men. This would of course result in a discovery of the facts of the case, and then the wrath of the bushwhackers would go to fever heat.

and then quick footsteps were heard on the cellar stairs.

A hand was laid on the door-latch, and a movement made to push it open. It remained for a few a curse followed.

Then came a vigorous push and another hum of voices. They could hear nothing, but they knew the stairway was full of men, and that the volcano was beginning to boil.

A vigorous pounding sounded at the door, but the little party remained silent. Ziah proved his courage by casting a heavy glance at Aunt Molly who went hurriedly to the front door.

The boys in blue were not in sight.

Twice the bushwhackers knocked at the door, and then, when they failed to get an answer, deep curses began to roll through their ranks.

Whether they yet suspected a trap was uncertain, but it was pretty sure that they intended to get out without delay.

Heavy pressure was brought to bear on the door, and it creaked on its hinges; but, beside the original bolts, it had been so strengthened by barreling that it did not move.

Of course the bushwhackers' next move was to shout vigorously, but even that did them no good.

The little garrison kept quiet, scarcely stirring except when Aunt Molly trotted to the door to look for the Union troops that had not come.

A brief lull followed below, and then came a new sound. It was a sharper pounding against the door, indicating that a board had been obtained with which they intended to demolish the door panels.

Sam and Ziah were ready for this move. Short, stout boards, with a hammer and some spikes lay close at hand, and as secrecy was no longer of use, they began to nail the board across the door.

Acting in unison in the bushwhackers' movement and then, as though they had suspected the state of affairs, they broke into yells and curses which were blood-curdling.

The volcano was at last in full motion, and woe be to the party above if it broke loose.

The boys in blue were still invisible!

#### CHAPTER XXIV. FIECLE FORTUNE.

Matters soon went from bad to worse in the cellar. The bushwhackers had found out two things for certain.

The first was that there was no wine in the place, the second that Jake Shelley was not there.

These two points being clear, and the door above proving to be fastened, they would have been in a quandary had they not perceived that the way was open.

As this conviction dawned upon them, they gave their rage full play. Their curses and useless yells made the women shiver in the hall above, and only that the door had been so tightly nailed they would soon have dashed it entirely away, and rushed up to secure bloody revenge.

As it was, the little party above "held the fort" for the time, and Cavalry Sam actually laughed at them. Howl, not because he resented the abuse, but joking, light, but because that courage of the sisters must be sustained as long as possible.

"They begin ter ease off," said the scound, anon, as the yell suddenly subsided.

"Can it be they have given up?" asked Vida.

"Not much. They are on the Injin tack now. A r̄-l̄ski is always the most dangerous when he is still, an' you kin bet them vintins are plottin' mischief."

"Probably they are already digging out of the cellar."

"It will take 'em half an hour ter do it, Miss Vida."

"And when they get out we have our weapons ready for use," added Sam.

"De Unionersaint in sight yet," announced Aunt Molly, as she trotted back from the door.

Enough time had elapsed to bring aid, if all had gone well, and he began to fear that the negro had failed in his mission, or else that no man had been granted to answer the call.

At that moment, however, all their attention was drawn to the bushwhackers.

The floor at the further end of the hall began to creak and tremble in a suggestive way.

"Sam!" said Sam, "is that their game?"

"I never thought of that," muttered Ziah.

"We must think of it now. Come, we will add your weight to the strength of the attack."

They lay on their backs through the boards cracked and trembled under their feet; they did not yield to any great extent, and the attempt was finally abandoned.

Silence once more reigned in the cellar. Several minutes passed, but Sam and Ziah were continually on the alert.

They moved around from window to window, expecting every moment to see an explosion under the foundation of the mansion; but ten minutes wore on without giving them any clue to the movements of the bushwhackers.

Really, the interlude had more to work against than was suspected.

The mansion had been well built, the floor was firm, and the rocks which composed the sides of the cellar were held together by cement, which was not easily moved.

All these thoughts were coming to baffle them, but they gained little idea not thought of by the Union men above.

When their unreasoning fury had exhausted itself they set about the work of escape systematically. In their belts were keen, strong knives, and with these they proposed to carve their way to victory.

The barrels and boxes were brought into use to elevate them near the floor, and then, in half a dozen different places, they began to cut through the rough beams in their knaves were this was not easy, for the boards were old and well-seasoned; but they worked diligently, and gained little by little.

This explains why they were so silent, and proves that Ziah's assertion that silence is often more to be dreaded than a good deal of noise.

At last, one of the cutters went through the first layer of boards, and a murmur arose from the men as they cast down a section of the floor, a foot wide. In the course of time, this beginning would be continued.

Meanwhile, matters suddenly assumed an unexpected phase up stairs.

Carrington, going to the front door to see if the blue-coats were in sight, saw altogether a different sight.

Directly in front of the piazza, two score of Confederate cavalry were gathered in line, their gray uniforms presenting a most unwelcome appearance and nearer yet was an unexpected sight.

This man had just been on the point of knocking at the door, when it was abruptly opened by Sam, and the two stood face to face, so near that they could have shaken hands.

Of the two, the Confederate was the least surprised.

He had drawn his revolver before advancing to the door, and only one movement was required to bring it to the level of Sam's breast, while at the same time he sternly said:

"One movement and you die! Yield yourself as my prisoner."

It was a painful and humiliating situation, but the man who kicks against a loaded revolver under such circumstances is mad.

Carrington saw all of his hopes go to ruin together; but as the battle within the house seemed sure to go against his friends anyway now, he dashed aside all dignity, and curtly said:

"Surrender it is. Drive on your ambulance."

Two or three men had advanced without orders at sight of the Union captain, and to them the Confederate consigned his prisoner. The other officer looked keenly inside the house; but finally walked back to where Sam was being bound to a horse.

"Who is inside?" he asked.

"General Torbert and about five hundred cavalry," was the prompt reply.

The Southerner made an impatient gesture.

"Act sensibly, and you will lose nothing by it," he said, speaking more moderately than could be expected. "There are, of course, more Unionists. How many?"

Before Sam could answer, a cry arose from one of the men in the rear, and all looked around.

From the northwestern wood a hundred boys in blue uniforms, with a hard gallop, their faces toward the house, and a wild-eyed negro youth leading the way.

Union aid was coming, in time, doubtless, to thwart the bushwhackers, but too late to save Cavalry Sam.

The Confederate leader saw himself outnumbered five to one, and one leap took him to the saddle. Then, one brief command to the saddle.

was uttered, the boys in gray gave a shout, which was answered from the blues, and away went the smaller force with Captain Carrington in their midst.

The commandant of the rescue party knew the Confederates had just arrived there, and, as he saw nothing of Sam, he concluded to let them alone and devote his attention to the work on which he had been dispatched.

Meanwhile, Sam Carrington was taken on a rough ride of some fifteen miles. He knew the road well and was aware that he was before the general's tent. On the way to General Early's camp, he had not seen quite a dozen. One of his thoughts of his life that was the most exciting. To be captured at such a time was indeed mortifying, and it was no wonder he relapsed into silence and would answer no questions.

It was after dark when the Confederate lines were reached, but, after a little delay, Sam was taken to General Early's tent. It was not the first time the captain had seen the square, bearded face, but he was not so well known to soldiers as the general, and no one recognized him until his name was pronounced.

He did not hesitate to give it. He had no intention of sulking any further, and each and every question asked by Early was promptly answered. He told his name, whereupon there was a little stir among the subordinate officers who knew him as "Cavairy Sam" to their sorrow; and he told, on his visit to the Warburton house, of the arrival of Shelley's bushwhackers and their lawyer, Carson.

At this point, Early frowned.

"This fellow must be given a lesson," he sternly said, "and a severe one at that. This is not his first offense, and I will show him that I do not give protection papers to have them defied by such a rascal as he."

The prisoner finished his story, and then Early added:

"Well, sir, sincerely hope your friends have by this time caged the whole lot of Shelley's men where they cannot escape; but my present business is with you. My scouts tell me that the Northern army has encamped on the eastern side of Cedar Creek."

"Pardon me, general," was the respectful answer, "but I cannot give any information in regard to General Sheridan's army."

"Well, well, have it your own way; it is not of importance. You will, of course, be treated as a prisoner, and it is likely an exchange will soon be effected. One noted so called 'Cavairy Sam' ought to bring a good price," the general added, with a faint smile.

At that moment, an officer who had at first been in the rear of the tent, pushed forward and stood near Early. He was a manly, handsome fellow, and, though still young, wore the uniform of a Confederate colonel.

Carrington saw him and started.

"Alfred Penrock?" he could not avoid exclaiming.

Every gaze was fixed upon the colonel, who first bowed and then looked at General Early.

"Do you know the prisoner?" the latter asked.

"He was once my schoolmate, general," Penrock answered, his voice husky from emotion.

Alfred crossed the face of his superior officer.

"So! so!" murmured the general; "such is the fate of war. Parted, perhaps, for years, you meet thus strangely. Here is a chance for moralizing, were that a soldier's business, but it is not."

He hesitated for a moment and then ordered the prisoner removed. This done he beckoned to Penrock.

"Perhaps you would like to have an interview with this old acquaintance," he said.

"I would, indeed, general."

"Go, then, and talk with him."

It was thus that, a few minutes later, Alfred came to the prison tent of his childhood friend and they met again after long years—years made doubly long by war and trouble.

The grim guard paced in front of the tent but they did not heed him. Their hands met in the earnest clasp.

"Sam!"

The same names they had used in the old days, but, to them, time had made no change in their feelings, even though they fought under rival flags.

Alfred sat down and they began to talk as only old friends, long separated, can talk.

but it was a meeting such as few men have. No bitterness hovered over it, only each believed himself in the right, and Penruddock was full of sorrow that Carrington should have fought under the Northern flag only to be, that evening, a fast prisoner.

Their conversation was long and earnest, and through it all neither spoke a bitter or reproofing word; neither tried to show that he was right and his companion wrong. The die had been cast, and before long it was fate to fight in blue and the other in gray, but that had not destroyed their friendship, and never would.

Of the state of the war they talked freely, though without undue confidence, and Penruddock freely admitted that the end would probably come soon in the Shenandoah Valley at least.

They paused, at last, with a warm clasping of hands, and Colonel Penruddock went away to seek Early. Modestly, but earnestly, he requested that if any exchange of prisoners was made, the case of Captain Carrington would be favorably considered, and the Confederate general listened patiently and said he would consider the request.

Cavalry Sam was left alone in his prison tent. He had no time to think, and his mind was not altogether easy in regard to the Misses Warburton, but he trusted that all was well there, and that did not seem to be any reason why the rescue party brought by Edmund should not have completely absolved Shelley and his band.

As for himself, Sam was a prisoner for the first time in his army experience; but his buoyant disposition stood him in good use, and he had faith to believe that all would be well.

At any rate his was the fortune of a soldier's life.

#### CHAPTER XXV. AT MIDNIGHT.

The hours were dark.

All had become quiet in the vicinity of Cavalry Sam's prison tent, and, despite his unpleasant situation, he began to feel sleepy.

He had the place all to himself, and, so far as hearing went, he would not have known that any human being was within miles of him except the guard who paced steadily in front of the tent.

"I have got a sound night's rest, despite the fact that I am in durance vile," he said, with a yawn.

Then he lay down, wormed into a comfortable position, and all looked favorable for speedy slumber.

Scarcely two minutes had passed when he became conscious that the wind was blowing freely from the quarter where lay his feet, and as he lay nestled before the light was taken from him that the tent was very strong and close, the fact surprised him somewhat.

A closer notice revealed the fact that the wind was entering as it will where an opening exists to any extent in the side of a tent, and he partially arose and looked toward the windy locality.

He had barely gained a sitting position, however, when a slight hiss sounded almost at his feet.

Very slight, indeed, was the sound, but his attentive hearing caught it, and he grew excited.

Some one was secretly entering the tent, if the signs went for anything, and that one might be a friend.

"Massa Sam!"

It was a very soft whisper, but the prisoner distinguishes the two words and, the whisper, the mode of address—all reminded of Edmund Smith.

He drew up his feet quickly, but dared not speak.

"Am you dar, Massa Sam?"

"Yes, yes," he whispered in return.

"Alone?"

"Yes."

Then into the tent wriggled a dark figure, not an injudicious sound betraying its movements, and Sam almost wondered if it was a ghost, until it crept to his side and seized his hands.

Miraculous though the coming might be, Edmund was beside him, and the colored boy caressed his hands, again and again, while Sam sat bewildered.

How the boy failed to be in the Confederate camp he could not understand. Such things were occasionally done by spies, but Edmund.

"Bress de Lord, I've done found you," the intruder said.

"How in the world did you get here?"

"Are you a prisoner, too, my boy?"

"Not much, sah? I've a spy, I is; an' I've done crawled a mile on my stomach. Bress you, Massa Cap'n, you don't s'pose I would let you stay wid dese drunks, do you? No, sah, I tol' Miss Vida I would get you free, an' I's goin' do it."

"How did you pass the pickets?"

"Crawled past dem; crawled on my stomach. I can't be done?" Sam demanded, with more animation.

"Golly! yes, sah, jest as easy. All you got to do is ter foller me. I'll take you fr' Massa Sam."

Further conversation made matters clearer, Edmund, on learning that Carrington was a prisoner, had promptly followed the Confederate general and approached their camp behind them.

He gave no particulars as to how he had passed the guards, except to say that, lacking the countersign, he had crawled past the various pickets. In this his knowledge of the ground had aided him greatly, but Sam still wondered.

"Now, Massa Cap'n, you hurry up, an' we we go back de same way I come," he added.

"I don't believe I can do it, but, by my life, I'll try," Carrington said. "Let us go at once. The guard may at any moment look in and find you."

The venture was promptly commenced. Edmund had cut a hole through the side of the tent, and they easily passed out. Then the real work began, and for half a mile they had to creep, where an enemy was liable at any moment to arise and give the alarm; while pickets must be passed—how, Sam did not know.

He felt perfectly helpless, and resigned the lead to Edmund very willingly.

The latter seemed equal to the emergency. At the very first he dropped on the ground, his unrelieved blackness making him seem like a rock or log, and with Sam at his heels the start was made.

The gallant captain must not be looked upon as an awkward blunderer. His early experience with Ziah Strout in the swamp had taught him how to crawl silently and skilfully, and he was only at fault to understand how they were to escape the notice of the pickets.

For some distance their way lay along the side of a ridge, where rocks and bushes gave them cover and made the pitching of tents impossible, and though the canvas tops and sleeping forms were seen terribly near at hand, the heart of the camp was soon passed.

They had done well among those whose business it was to sleep; now for those who were allotted to keep awake.

Between the rougher part of the ridge and the wood, lay a tolerably safe space, and the way was clear to the camp.

Carrington paused in real apprehension.

"Heavens!" he said, "we can never pass them unheeded."

"Stand straight an' walk fru' dem," said Edmund.

"We shall be seen and stopped."

"Dey too tired to catch who is walkin' over 'em. Dey, an' dat to sleep. Nobody seed me, when I come an' Ireckon, dey won't look when we go back."

A brief survey convinced Sam that there was no other way.

Either he must remain in the camp, or make the venture, and he was not a man to leave a chance untried.

"Lead on!" he firmly said.

They advanced boldly, stepping between, and over, the sticks of the Confederate camp. It was a moment of thrilling suspense. Every moment they expected some one to rise up and confront them, and then, despite the darkness, Sam's uniform would betray all.

Luckily, no one stirred, and as they stepped over the men they took care not to brush against them.

They were at last beyond the camp proper, and only the pickets remained to be passed.

Only the pickets! There was a world of meaning in the simple trio of words.

No longer a sleeping but a watchful enemy was to crawl past them, and their only way was to crawl past the posts.

Edmund was a man of no small sense of danger, but his movements were as soft and sagacious as though he was some old follower of Pophamton come back to fulfill a mission, and Sam was not less skillful.

"Crawl like a snake, Massa Sam," the negro said, and then they went forward again.

Through and under the bushes, as noiselessly as possible, but with the odds against them.

It was no pine wood where one could walk freely and make no sound, but dry sticks lay numerously under their feet.

Several rods were successfully passed, and then Edmund stopped and touched Carrington's arm at the same time pointing ahead. No words were needed.

Sam saw a sentinel pacing his beat, and knew the critical moment was at hand.

"Come," said the black guide.

Inch by inch they crawled on, steadily, nearing the picket's line of travel, and then, when his back was turned, crept almost to where he had just been, and lay flat and silent.

The Confederate walked slowly back. He was a bold, manly looking soldier, of large frame, a bad enemy to meet, if appearances went for anything, and Sam almost expected his keen eyes would pierce the cover of the thicket and end in their ruin.

He passed so near that they could have touched him, yet at the limit of his beat, where he had turned back, as before.

Almost opposite their ambush he suddenly paused, and the click of his rifle-lock sounded with startling clearness.

For a moment Sam had no doubt but that they were seen, and a fierce light shone in his eyes as he heard the old familiar challenge:

"Halt! Who comes there?"

But a voice answered from beyond the line of trees.

"A friend, with the countersign."

Carrington experienced a revulsion of feeling, and the guard continued in his business-like way:

"Advance, friend, with the countersign."

The previous speaker came forward, whistled the magic word over the presented bayonet, and then passed on to the interior of the camp, while the grim picket went his way.

He was a wide-awake guard, but he did not see the two forms that flitted across his beat, instantly dropping into the bushes, nor did he afterward see them hurrying cautiously away.

They had passed the last danger, however, and when half a mile away Edmund stopped.

"I got you uns inter trouble, Massa Sam, by hitchin' onter Jake Shelleb when I did. Have I made amends fru' dat?"

"Nobly, Edmund, nobly!" declared the captain, and with the dusky hand within his own he added his earnest thanks.

Then they went on to the Union camp, Edmund telling as they went what had occurred at Warburton's after Sam left.

All the bushwhackers had been seized and taken to the camp of the boys in blue—all except Shelley. He had been left by Sam and Ziah, as beforestated, had managed to get clear of his bonds and make good his escape.

#### CHAPTER XXVI.

##### CEDAR CREEK.

Cavalry Sam and Edmund reached Sheridan's camp without further adventure, and the first man to greet them was Ziah Strout. He had been laying his plans to rescue Sam, but the work was happily off his hands.

Taken all in all, the day's work had been a good one, for the capture of the bushwhackers had left Jake Shelleb without a man at his back. His own escape was deeply regretted, but time might yet bring him back.

The following morning Ziah rode over to Warburton's to assure the ladies that all was well with Carrington; and when he had made his report they felt wholly at ease. They had recovered from their own fright, and were calmly awaiting whatever fate had in store for them.

Another camp was approaching in the distance, Cedar Creek.

That day, General Sheridan left the army under the temporary command of Wright, the gallant commander of the Sixth Corps, and went to Washington on business of importance.

No one had a thought that trouble would occur during his absence. The Confederates were believed to be too thoroughly disengaged to risk a battle, and the position of the Union army was very strong.

They were on the east side of Cedar Creek, with Crook's corps in advance, Emory's a little behind, and Wright's—the rear of Emory. The cavalry of Torbert, Custer, and Merritt had favorable positions, and Averill's gal-



ter whar he leads of they know et means death."

"I been thinkin' o' that very thing," said Shelley, "an' I think I see a chance fur ter do a pretty bit o' business an', mebbe, get a sound reward. O' course word has long since ben sent ter Sheridan, an' he is on his way ter the scene o' battle. Waal, what sort o' an'ide would it be fur us to ambush him as he comes down?"

"To ambush him?" repeated one of the other men.

"Yes, we have only ter lay by his road an' wait, an' then when he comes a' west directed sitt will forever end his career; an', it may be, save Early from another defeat."

The bushwhackers caught the idea, and an approving murmur ran through the crowd.

They were ready to aid the cause they so rightly upheld in all possible ways, and Shelley's scheme looked remarkably brilliant.

They spoke as one man to coincide with him; and then, their horses having satisfied their thirst, they rode on across the ford.

Cavalry Sam was left alone, but a good-sized idea had been put in his head. These fellows mean harm to gallant Phil Sheridan; and, in some way, they must be prevented.

"We'll stop him," said the men, "General Wright" was his instant decision.

Then he rode from the bushes, up the path from the ford; and, striking off across the sparse wood to the north, dashed along the course of the stream at full speed.

At last he judged that his detour had been continued a sufficient length of time to take him past the Confederate lines, and he again crossed the creek, and headed in a course which he judged would take him to Middletown.

At that place, too, he believed General Wright would effect a rally, and he must see him as soon as possible.

He made a pretty correct estimate; but Wright, as before stated, had not thought himself in condition to fight at Middletown, and, as a result, was resting on the Winchester road, round beyond the town, while Early had passed within the place to receive his breath.

Sam had advanced dangerously near the village without suspecting the truth, when, suddenly, a score of riders in Union blue dashed out o' a wood in hot haste.

He pulled up his horse in some surprise; but, as the smoke from the gun in gray began to emerge from the smokestack, he saw that the first party had need of haste.

They were outnumbered and hard pressed.

Putting the spurs to his horse, he dashed across the field, and a shout arose from the Unionists.

They had promptly recognized him, nor was he far behind them in that respect. They were all of Avery's cavalry; and, best of all, Ziah Strout was in their lead.

No wonder they cheered; for they were without an officer to lead them, and Cavalry Sam was a favorite with all.

He quickly joined them, said a few words of greeting, and then settled down beside Ziah to get all possible news, even while they continued at the rapid pace it would do no break.

The scouts described the position of both armies, and, by the time he had finished, they were well past Middletown and abreast of Wright's command, but the lot chose of the Confederates made it impossible for them to turn and join their army then; they must go on up the valley.

Ziah also briefly told how he had gone out in search of Carrington; and, meeting the bandit of cavalry that had become separated from the others while near Cedar Creek, had been forced into the general flight.

Sam looked back at the pursuers and longed to turn at bay, but they were outnumbered five to one, and it would not do. Although they were being driven away from their army the flight must be continued.

Still it nettled him, and he resolved to try an experiment.

A mile ahead lay two ridges which extended north and south, with a narrow valley between, and into this valley he resolved to ride.

What he would do after that depended on the course of the pursuers. Any one slightly acquainted with the place would have said that valley was a dead-trap, for it ended in bluffs at the northern end, but Sam knew every foot of the way, and knew, too, just how to get out if the enemy followed into the valley.

He hoped they would not do this, but, instead, divide their forces and ride around to cut off at the far end of the ridge; and, in this way, which seemed most probable, for any one could see that more rapid riding could be done outside the ridges than between.

The result even surpassed his hopes.

He reached the *cold de sac* and rode straight on, and then the pursuers divided into three parties. The first, comprising forty men, followed in his own tracks, the second and third each bearing away, the thirty went on to the right and the other thirty to the left.

Sam was delighted. All was working to his liking, and if his men showed the mettle he expected, they would surely score a victory.

They were riding between steep bluffs which seemed impassable, but Cavalry Sam knew better. Half way through, he turned abruptly to the western ridge and went on at a gallop. His men followed in his plan, and went where he led confidently.

At the indicated point, the bluffs fell back to a slope, and by the time the first party of pursuers reached a place where they could see well the bold Unionists were half way up, moving where it seemed impossible for a horse to stand.

Still they resolved to follow, and at the turn of the narrow paths, of nature's own make, wound around where all seemed rough and wild.

Before they were half way up, the fugitives were at the crest; by the time they reached that point, there was no sign of them. Where had they gone?

The second detachment soon learned to their sorrow. Going at a gallop, they were about to descend the slope, when, suddenly, the Unionists burst from a wooded place at the base of the ridge and struck their flank with irresistible force.

Before that dash many a man went down never to rise again, and the confusion which always follows a cavalry move of the kind could not but ensue; but the boys in gray were not made of yielding material, and they held.

The first shock had reduced their number until the two forces were about equal, and each man quickly found his opponent, and sabers crossed with a vengeful clash.

Sam, however, had taken pains to make his followers understand that all depended on a quick victory, and with this idea strong in their minds they fought with a fury which, although it could not surprise given the Confederates, soon set the dazed rebels.

Many of the rebels went down, and then the others, who, unluckily for them, had no officer at their head, turned and fled along the back trail.

The Unionists did not pursue. They, too, wanted to run, and away they went toward the west.

Sam, however, had not forgotten Jake Shelley and his plan, and as they were already two miles north of Wright's rallying point, he determined to go on and strike the Winchester turnpike to see if there was any sign that the bushwhackers were lying in wait for General Sheridan.

#### CHAPTER XXIX.

##### SHERIDAN'S RIDE.

It will be remembered that the cause of the fact that General Wright was in temporary command at Cedar Creek was because the Union leader had gone to Washington on official business.

His business finished, Sheridan returned to Winchester, and was sleeping there the eventful night when Early's force crept through the passes of the ridge and across the town to join General Shenandoah to reach the Union position.

Early in the morning, that long to be remembered nineteenth of October, the booming of cannon was heard in Winchester, rolling up from the south with the tone so familiar in the valley at that day.

It was a startling sound, but, at first, Sheridan supposed it was caused only by a reconnaissance and calmly made his breakfast without a suspicion of the great events which were to follow.

The meal finished, he mounted his horse and rode southward along the turnpike, accompanied by his escort, and not yet stirred into full activity. He was going to rejoin his boys in blue, but he little thought that at that moment, they were a badly whipped army, all in retreat, and many fleeing toward Winchester without any effort to order.

His eyes were opened when, before reaching Kerstensburg, he met the van of the fugitives. They came in wild disorder, believ-

ing themselves closely pursued, and desperate as was the situation, it was magnified five-fold in their account to the amazed general.

Not long, however, did he wait to hear them talk. He saw the need of instant action, and was equal to the test. Bidding his escort follow, he again moved along the turnpike, this time at a tremendous gallop, and rod after rod of the way was rapidly left behind.

The crowd of fugitives increased in numbers as he went, but the sight of their loved leaders speeding toward the van, warmed their blood, and they greeted him with cheers.

Swinging his hat around his head, "Little Phil" sent back encouraging words which have gone into history to be read by millions in the future, who are, as yet, unborn.

"Face the other way, boys; face the other way! We are going back to our camp. We are going back to our camp!"

Never was there an' more inspiring presence; never a dead which so went to the hearts of the men he led, filling them with a new courage, born of his own heroism and dashing presence.

The erstwhile panic-stricken fugitives drew a long breath as he receded, looked at each other questioning, then paused, turned to "face the other way," as directed, and the fugitives followed him.

Still over the road lingered the Union chief. His gallant horse seemed to understand the dire need of wondrous speed; he caught the enthusiasm of his master, and with his powerful form strained to the utmost spurned the hard road under his flying feet and cut down mile after mile of the intervening space.

Well might he speed, for much was at stake on that famous ride; well might he flash his eyes with pride, for never did a horse run a more gallant course, or carry a more gallant rider.

History was waiting to tell of man and horse.

Ride, Sheridan, ride, for your boys in blue need your potent voice; speed, proud horse, speed, for you are carrying your master South "to save the day."

Near the Winchester road, half way between that place and Middletown, a score of men in Union blue were riding slowly north. That they were not panic-stricken fugitives was shown by their measured movements, and when we say that Cavalry Sam was at their head the reader will need no further introduction.

Carrington was looking earnestly ahead, and his face suddenly brightened when Ziah Strout emerged from a wood and rode slowly down to meet them.

"Well?" questioned Sam, quickly.

"Where?"

"Ambushed near the road in that very wood. Jake Shelley is thar in his pride, an' I kin see that he is hankerin' ter speed the bullet that shall kill Phil Sheridan."

"He will never speed it," said Captain Carrington, sternly. "Prepare for fight, men, and we will sweep those dogs away."

"We will," said Ziah.

"For what?"

"That's a hundred on them thar. Jake Shelley has picked up more men somwhere, all bushwhackers, an' they are five to our one."

"I don't care if there are five hundred. Boys, those fellows cannot stand a vigorous charge, and we shall have them hemmed in before they can get away. When you are passing along the turnpike, - wait you, shall we strike with a rush, and kill 'em?"

Every man answered affirmatively, and then Ziah smote himself on the thigh.

"Hurrur fur you, ye eternal slashers!" he said. "I knowed you, I must warn yer, but I thought I was sure o' your pluck. Feller mean' we will give Jake Shelley a lesson."

"It shan't be his last if I get a chance at him," said Captain Carrington.

Ziah led the way and the cavalrymen followed in dead silence; they were resolved to make a sure thing of it.

At the end of ten minutes they had gained the proper position for the proposed dash, and then only one word from Carrington was needed to hurl them on the foe.

In the underbrush, Jake Shelley and his bushwhackers were gathered, and, as the coming of the Union chief. Stimulated by their words, they could not very well miss their aim if once their rifles covered his gallant form, and though some of them feared that retribution would speedily follow the dash-

terdly deed, they were resolved to risk all. But, without any warning, a sudden crashing sounded in the bushes behind them, and as they looked around, it was to see a body of men in Union blue dashing upon them with drawn sabers, too near when seen to be avoided by the bulk of the bushwhackers.

It was one of those sudden dashes which made our civil war famous, and one of those gallant exploits which had earned for the young leader his *sobriquet* of "Cavalry Sam," and on the present occasion he cared nothing for the fact that the foe was five times his own number.

With a cheer they dashed among the bushwhackers, who had left their own horses at one side, and then revolver and saber were ready. The match was joined, and often followed by the vicious sound of the steel as it struck flesh and bone, and out over the steel crept the little streams of red as they were sent home.

Shelley's voice arose, urging his men to stand firm, and though a full score ran away at the first, the others obeyed and fought bravely.

The advantage was against them, however, despite their superior numbers, for while they fought on foot, the Unionists galloped in and struck wherever a head was to be seen.

Dead and dying men soon covered the ground, but not one wore Union blue. It was hard to get at the charging troopers, and some decree of Providence seemed to shield them from the enemy's bullets.

Ziah was ever at the front, and his loud cheers arose frequently as he fought in his grim way.

Cavalry Sam seemed to bear a charmed blade and a charmed life. No one could reach his person with steel or ball, and where he fought the destruction was terrible.

His gaze was ever roving in search of Jake Shelley, and at last he saw him at the outskirts of the battle.

The guerrilla chief had seen that the fight was going against his gang, and had resolved to save himself, happen what might to those left behind.

Sam spurred toward him.

"Hold, you base dog!" he shouted. "You and I have a debt to settle! Hold, where you are!"

Shelley had no heart to obey, for he feared the man he had once hunted with bloodhounds; but he saw that he must either turn and fight or be overtaken and run the risk of being attacked in the rear, so he wheeled and faced his enemy with a saber in his hand.

"Vilain!" exclaimed the captain, as he reined in his horse so suddenly that the earth was flung high in the air. "I have you at last. We will fight to the death, but it shall be on equal terms."

He sprang from his saddle, and at last they stood face to face, armed alike, in every way on equal terms, and both well aware that it was to be a duel in which one would fall.

Their sabers crossed, and then began a desperate combat. What Shelley lacked in size and weight he made up in sheer zeal, while his guard was really very good. Stroke for stroke, parry for parry, a wall of steel seemed to be between the two, and the clash echoed strangely through the wood.

Unknown to either, for they had eyes only for themselves, the other men were done with fight. The guerrillas had fled or surrendered, and the boys in blue stood around the duelists, silently watching.

### CHAPTER XXX.

#### SHERIDAN KEPT HIS WORD.

Cavalry Sam began to press his opponent sharply. He had found that all the fellow's prowess lay in self-defense; he dared not make a determined assault himself. At the last, he was fighting only with a vague hope that some lucky chance would give him the victory.

Sam's movements became bewildering. His saber seemed everywhere at once. The wall of steel dazzled Shelley. He gave ground, and felt a strong desire to wheel and run. Already his limbs were breathing hard, while Sam was as fresh as ever.

Suddenly a shout went up from the boys in blue. The bushwhacker was down; and as they saw the blood gush out over his breast, they knew he had received his last hurt.

With a powerful effort he raised himself on his elbow, and reached for his fallen weapon.

He never gained it. Even as his fingers

were about to close upon it, he gasped, trembled, and then fell back with a moan.

He had gone on his last raid.

The victory was complete. Many guerrillas lay dead on the ground, others were prisoners, and the remainder had gone away in swift flight.

The day had turned well.

On the highway went the boys in blue. Down the hard road came a horseman at whom all looked with joy. Cheers greeted him as hero; and, without a word of reproach to the fugitives, he swung his hat as he came, and uttered words of encouragement.

Sheridan was nearing the goal.

Captain Carrington and his handful of bluecoats fell into the rear, and the remaining rebels were captured.

When Sheridan entered the Union camp he found matters much better than he had dared hope. General Wright had been doing all that man could to get the troops into order and ready for an attack in turn, and Sheridan approved of all he had done.

"We'll have camps and all those cannon back again," said the plucky Sheridan, as he rode along the front and gave to each regiment the encouraging words which made them cheer louder even than the fugitives had done.

Preparations for an advance went on steadily, and at three o'clock the order for moving came.

The Unionists were no longer a beaten and demoralized army. At one o'clock Emory had won one move in the game by repulsing an attack, all of which went to brighten the vision of the boys in blue; and when Sheridan came down among them, no more was needed.

They felt sure of victory.

When the army moved, a firm and resolute column of veterans set their faces toward the south, and went on steadily.

Captain Carrington had rejoined his command, but he found many a man missing who had spoken with him but twenty-four hours before. Now, they were going to seek satisfaction.

The first line of the Confederates was attacked with zeal. They stood firm, for a while, but the pressure was too strong, and they fell back to give the artillery a chance.

With the renewed boom of the great guns came new destruction for the Unionists, and the leaden storm was so hot that for a while they were checked, but their leader was equal to the emergency.

Enough veterans were brought into active use, and two gallant charges sufficed to carry that position.

At the same time the cavalry came down heavily on both of Early's flanks, and under this irresistible pressure the boys in gray could not stand.

Confusion seized upon the whole Confederate army. Beset with an impetuosity which exceeded their own at Cedar Creek, they turned and fled in great disorder. Through Middletown they went in a way which resembled Sheridan's dispatch after the battle of Fort Donelson. We have just met the energy whirling through Winchester.

Beyond that terrible place the road was narrow and poor, and it soon became filled with cannon, wagons and the like, all in a confused mass, and the danger of losing his whole army if he tarried to look after them, influenced Early to leave them where they were and save his men if nothing more.

He continued his flight with his broken army, an army which was destined to never again be a factor in the Confederate army. Almost utterly ruined, they had no resources at their command, and on that day the war in the Shenandoah practically ended.

Sheridan had kept his word, and made for himself a name destined to live forever in American history.

Our account of Cavalry Sam may well end in detail with that great day in the valley, though there is much more that might be written.

Let us briefly say that his services on that day gained for him a major's commission, and that he was with General Carrington in his encounter with Early at Waynesboro on the second of the following March, and in the daring exploits that followed. Another story might be written of his adventures when he went under the brave Sheridan to aid Grant in capturing Richmond.

How that undertaking succeeded, is well known, and when General Lee finally surrendered the remnant of his brave but battle-torn army, it was Colonel Samuel Carrington, who silently thanked Heaven that

there would be no more war in his native land.

And one day he asked permission to hold an interview with General Alfred Penruke, who was among those to surrender, and the friends met as brothers once more.

"Alfred!"

And as their hands crossed they forgot that they were dignified officers, and that they had fought on opposing sides through long years of war.

War there had been, dark and dreadful, but their hearts were the same as when they played together as children under the shadow of the whispering pines.

Let us take a parting glance at all our characters one year later.

In the Shenandoah Valley all is once more peace and quiet. War has vanished and business has been resumed. New houses have gone up where old ones stood, and on the Carrington and Penruke plantations these are especially fine.

The Warburton mansion is ablaze with light, and all the people around know that on that evening both Augusta and Vida are to be married. The younger sister it is who is to become Mrs. Carrington, but Augusta feels no regret.

Once she had been for Sam with more than common tenderness, but her affection turned to Alfred, and now she is as happy as they are.

Outside the house, two men stand together earnestly talking. One is Ziah Stout, the other, Edmund Smith.

"Bress de Lord," says the latter; "I nebber was so happy before. Did you see how they did all look? Oh, dan am a glorious occasioun."

"Right you are. Cleon, right you are," says the scout, with emotion. "El beats 'll the weddin's I ever seed in Virginny, an' you an' me will dance a breakdown when we get time."

And then Aunt Molly opens the door.

"Hi! you nus, what you doin' dar? Don't you dare keep de weddin' waitin'. Come right in dis minute, an' mind you behave well afore de minister!"

May peace and prosperity ever hover over the beautiful Valley of the Shenandoah.

THE END.

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